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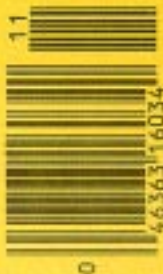
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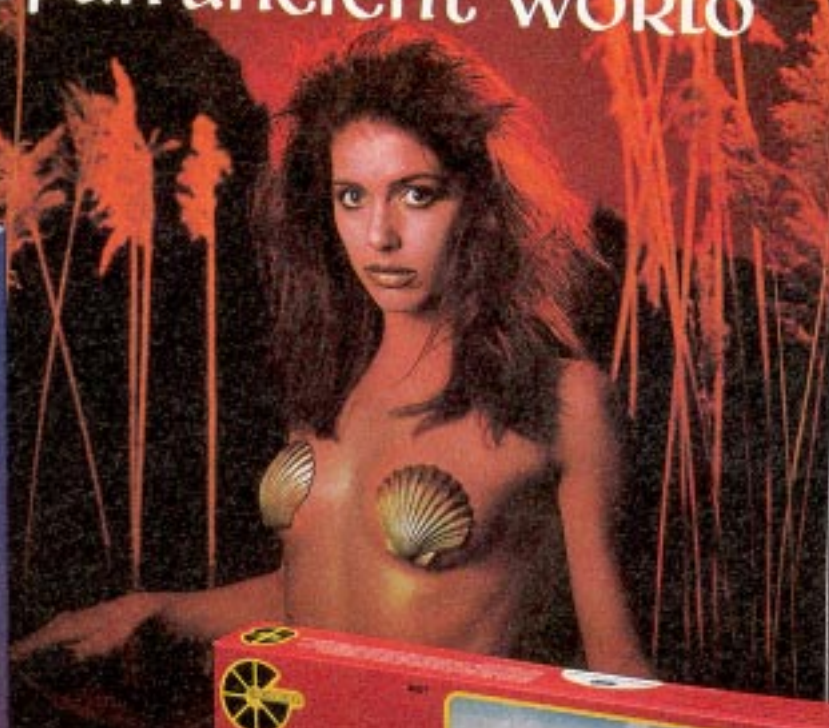
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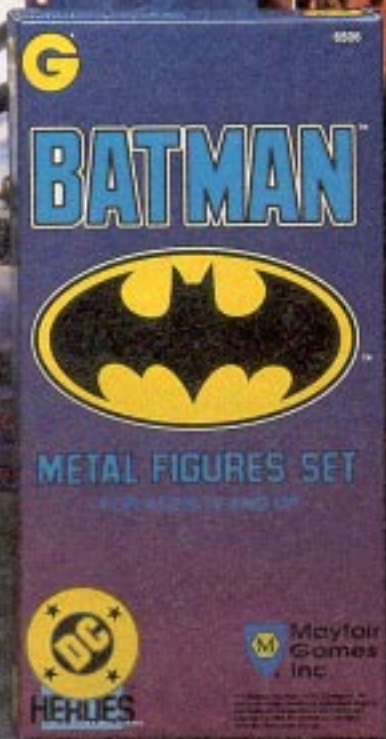


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COVER

This issue of DRAGON® Magazine showcases the talents of one of our longtime contributors, Jim Holloway. You'll find his work throughout our special edition on the world of the AD&D® *Oriental Adventures* tome. We lead off with Jim's cover work, "Sushi From Hell" (at least that's what he scribbled on the bottom of the painting). As for what Hell itself looks like, see his work on page 11.

LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom.

Every two weeks?

Dear Dragon:

I am writing in hopes of getting your magazine to go at least bi-monthly. Once a magazine is just not enough! I really like your articles, fiction section, computer and book reviews, everything about your magazine. But once I read the month's issue, I have to wait a whole three weeks to get more of this great magazine. I know you have enough on your hands already, but I just like this magazine too much to get it just once a month. So please, please, please go bi-monthly at least.

Jonah S. Ewell
No address given

Yours is exactly the kind of letter we love to receive here, but if we tried to put this magazine out once every two weeks, we would have to be taken to the Great Lakes Home for Self-Lobotomized Editors within the first two issues (I think you meant bi-weekly or semi-monthly instead of bi-monthly, but I've heard the term "bi-monthly" used for either meaning.) You should seriously think about subscribing to DUNGEON® Adventures, which would give you more than enough material to keep you going. See our subscription cards in this issue.

Overseas notes

Dear Dragon:

With the exception of a couple of issues, you've done a great job of entertaining and informing us gamers who are overseas serving the military. It hurts to see all the great stuff coming out that we won't see for another year (e.g., the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* will probably be in the Stars & Stripes bookstore in September 1992).

I have a few questions for you:

1. whatever happened to the "Daily Planet" (DC™ HEROES game) Gaming Supplement?
2. Why don't you have the World Gamers Guide? I'm here on the 662nd plane of the Abyss (actually at Giebelstadt AAF in Germany, same difference), and I need to do some gaming!
3. When is the next Best of DRAGON Magazine Anthology?
4. Are there plans to republish the Finieous Treasury (oh please, please, grovel, grovel, licking your boots, beg, beg)?

Michael S. Webster
APO NY

are no plans at present to start the series again.

2. We discontinued "The World Gamers Guide" feature in DRAGON Magazine with issue #131. The magazine's increased distribution worldwide was responsible; we were simply getting too many entries to publish, and the space devoted to the feature was not benefiting the majority of our readers. We still encourage gamers the world over to organize gaming groups, set up conventions, and use the resources of their local game and hobby stores.

3. We made mention in issue #133's "Letters" column that an anthology would be released in early 1989, but the anthology was dropped from the production schedule. We have no further anthologies planned for now, though some anthology types have been discussed. What would you like to see if we did decide to publish an anthology of material from DRAGON Magazine? Write now and tell us.

4. We have no plans to reprint *The Finieous Treasury*, the collected graphic adventures of *Finieous Fingers the thief and his friends*, that was released by TSR, Inc. in 1981. *Finieous* left DRAGON Magazine years ago for another gaming magazine that is no longer published. However, the new adventures of *Finieous*, *Fred*, and *Charly* now appear in *Space Gamer* magazine, published by 3W, Inc. (4070 West Street, Cambridge CA 93428).

Back to BBSs

Dear Dragon:

After reading Roger Moore's editorial in issue #146 ("R.I.P.: RPGs?"), I thought of another use for computers on the subject of RPGs. For those with modems, there is always the option of BBSs [bulletin board systems]. Many BBSs have ongoing RPGs, usually run by the users. I myself call a number of BBSs that have RPGs to play, and one BBS is devoted completely to RPGs.

While computer games are excellent (and getting better) for the gamer, BBSs provide a way to play your favorite game and get the human contact that makes the game fun.

Aaron Goldblatt
Fort Worth TX

The BBS games that I've seen work more like play-by-mail (PBM) games, but they do introduce interaction with real people. Some on-line computer services offer real-time role-playing games, like the CompuServe® Information Service's Island of Kesmai fantasy game (see "Kesmai and Beyond," in issue #149) and licensed SNIPER™ World War II computer game (see "The Game Wizards," in issue #148).

For what it's worth, TSR, Inc. has no objection if gamers wish to play TSR's games on-line through BBSs. However, such use cannot be made for profit; no one can charge other players to play in a TSR game. I recall seeing one BBS system that was completely devoted to the AD&D® Oriental Adventures system; another—the "Illuminati" BBS—is operated by Steve Jackson Games in Austin, Tex. (512-447-4449, 24 hours, 300/1200/2400 baud).

Laying the blame

In mid-September, there was a news article about a 17-year old student in McKee, Ky., who took 11 high-school classmates hostage. He was armed with a shotgun and two revolvers. The student eventually surrendered to state police officers. No one was injured.

As officials sorted through the student's belongings while negotiating with him just before his surrender, they discovered a book that the authorities think formed the basis for the student's hostage taking. Any guesses as to what that book was?

If you were afraid it was a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rule book, you were wrong. It was Stephen King's *Rage*, a novel about a teenager who takes other students hostage before being shot by police. The McKee student had not seen his real father since he was four years old; during the hostage ordeal, he consistently demanded that he be able to see his father. The main character in King's novel had serious problems with his own father. It seems reasonable to guess that the McKee student identified greatly with the situation in the novel—and he was unfortunately upset enough about his life to do something radical about it.

The question is: Was the book responsible for the student's actions?

I've never read a Stephen King novel, though a friend once told me I resemble one of the characters in *Christine* (he wouldn't say which one; I assume it wasn't the car). Given the circumstances described in the paper, I find it very difficult to believe that the book was in any way responsible for the student's actions. If someone is extremely upset, mentally disturbed, or very immature, almost anything can set him off.

The McKee student is hardly alone. All of you should recall John Hinkley, Jr., who shot and wounded the President of the United States in 1982 for reasons that had reportedly something to do with seeing the movie *Taxi Driver* a great many times. He was found to be insane, as everyone knows, and no one blamed the movie for his actions. A great many other people had seen it, and it hadn't caused them to shoot other people.

You might also remember the teenager in Florida who went on trial some years ago for the murder of an elderly

Continued on page 86

1. The "Daily Planet" supplement was actually an advertisement series from Mayfair Games, supporting its licensed DC HEROES game. There



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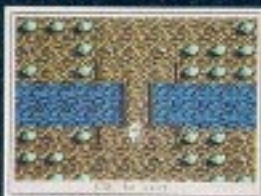
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Enough! It seems that evil player characters are fast becoming the "female dwarf beards" of '89. As a gamer with over 11 years playing experience (five as Dungeon Master), please indulge me for one story

Bored with playing the good guys, my players started asking for a "different" campaign. Talk turned to assassins, antipaladins, and mages of foul disposition. "One more game in Oceanus," I said, "and then we'll see."

Next gaming session, the party was approached by an old man who spoke of a great evil spreading across the land, monsters overrunning the countryside, and events that obviously indicated his insanity. The diamond he produced as a retainer, however, convinced the party to hear his story. They retired to the Naughty Mermaid Inn.

Once there, the party was lead to a large room filled with crates, casks, and barrels. The insane look on the man's face was gone, and he spoke quite eloquently. "Our world is in great danger. These supplies are needed desperately. Thank you for aiding us." He then began to chant arcane words. A circle of power appeared about the party, and they were gone.

They reappeared in an area of ruins, shaken awake by scantily clad humans. Orcs were overrunning the human forces, using rods that flashed powerful beams of energy through the night. "Run quick, fools, or die!" the PCs heard as the humans fled. The mage was slow to act and was struck by an orc's power beam. Screaming in pain, he looked at the stump that was once his forearm and hand. The party barely escaped.

What had happened? The party had been sent to a parallel world where a space probe run amok had caused the evil races to gain control. Most good-aligned individuals had been eliminated; the remainder fought with guerilla tactics and aggressively took what they needed to survive. Paladins wore leather for its stealth value and were feared for their great fighting prowess. Rangers became the kings of the warbands, relying on their survival abilities to save their people. Magic was at a premium. The good-aligned still kept to their principles when possible, but exceptions became the rule. Neutrals were enigmas, as often enemies as allies.

The horror of this world came home to the players when the party met the counterparts of their own high-level characters (then retired on Oceanus) on this world. Leading a warband, these counterparts were far different from the characters my players used. Attitudes, abilities, and features had changed. Most had lost at least

one limb or organ and looked, as one player later said, "tough." The elves in the party recoiled in horror to learn that the three high-level elf characters were the last of their race. Suddenly, the "evil" in the world was not so attractive. Unable to return home, the party began a quest to free at least some small part of their new world. The task was not easy.

Parties of adventuring humanoids hunted the survivors — raiding their lairs, seeking powerful artifacts, and smashing uprisings. Using technology (couched by the probe as powerful magic), the evil races ruled supreme, and the good-aligned beings fought for survival in a world gone mad. The challenge became to remain good while suffering all the negative aspects normally given to evil.

The moral? Both the players and I learned that the allure of evil player characters is not in being evil per se, but rather the challenge of survival outside the bounds of the "normal" game setting. Through playing this world's evil, the party strengthened its ability to play another world's good. So the next time a player says, "I want to play an assassin!" give 'im a hunted paladin instead. He *might* survive to enjoy it.

John Wommer
Fort Ord CA

Aaaarrggghh! I have seen enough of letters that talk about the benefits of having a good- or evil-aligned campaign. By far the more enjoyable is the *neutral* campaign. Most PC groups should consist of neutrals bent one way or the other, and perhaps one strongly evil or good character. Occasionally, it is also fun to play a group of purely good characters on a crusade against evil, or a group of evil characters on a raid. Using only one alignment, however, loses its spice after a while. A veteran player should have a folder of characters of every alignment, level, and class, for they are all fun to play, although some more than others. I feel that those who play only good or evil characters are missing a whole facet of the AD&D® game. An otherwise dull adventure could have some interesting role-playing on the side if the two characters are a good cleric and an evil thief, thrown together against their will by necessity. This could never happen in a good-or-evil-only campaign.

In issue #146's "Forum" were a few letters concerning this topic. Ian Reyes wrote about the fun of playing evil characters. I think that an all-evil group, although it may work together for survival during an adventure, will not last long. After the adventure, everyone will have an eye on the other's newly (and probably ill-) gotten items, and they will not worry about monsters waiting to kill them if they split up. Furthermore, I think that a continuous campaign of this sort will make for dull role-playing after a while. I agree that it is fun to role-play and battle through scenes in which a character has been caught in the royal treasure chamber, but there are other good role-playing scenes, and

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SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom.

This month, "Sage Advice" looks at the AD&D® *Oriental Adventures* volume. Page numbers cited herein refer to that game volume by David "Zeb" Cook.

What do the birth ranks generated on table 38 (page 31) really mean?

As explained on page 31, the exact circumstances of a character's birth are up to the DM. The higher the initial die roll, the better off the character's family is. A first rank character, for example, probably comes from a well-to-do family with clear connections to the imperial family, or perhaps the character belongs to the imperial family (he might be a distant cousin). Upper-class families are skilled artisans, scribes, or wealthy merchants.

I don't understand the birthright rules on page 34. How do you use birth rank in order to modify the chances for a birthright? If you subtract birth rank from the number of rolls on table 40, then characters with low ranks never receive birthrights, right?. Also, not all the results on the birth rank table (table 38, page 31) have numerical values.

The term "birth rank" is used incorrectly on page 34. The term that should be used here is "birth order" (see *Unearthed Arcana*, page 83). An only child has a birth order of zero. A character born late in the birth order might not receive any birthright even in a wealthy family.

How frequently are the generals of the animal kings encountered?

The "frequency" listing does not apply to these beings, as they appear only when their kings send them on errands. The DM must decide where and when they appear. If you wish to include them on a special random encounter table, assuming that PCs might encounter a general while it is abroad on some errand. Their frequency should be very rare at best.

Can samurai PCs become daimyos? If so, at what level?

Samurai characters can become daimyos



Illustration by Gary Williams

but not simply by virtue of level. The character must first gain control of a province, either by conquest or by imperial decree (or both). Once control is firmly established, the character becomes a daimyo. The character must be at least 10th level in order to have the hierarchy of followers described on page 22 of the *Oriental Adventures* tome.

Can Oriental characters have psionic abilities?

Psionics are optional in an Oriental setting using the AD&D 1st Edition rules, just as they are in non-Oriental settings.

How do you determine the value of gems found during an Oriental adventure?

Use the gem section of the 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide* (pages 25-26) or the 2nd Edition *DMG* (page 134) to determine values and properties of gems.

Why hasn't TSR published *Oriental Adventures* character sheets?

The newest AD&D character sheets (TSR product number 9264) are designed to work with Oriental characters.

Several character classes must have the calligraphy proficiency. The class descriptions seem to indicate that calligraphy costs one slot,

but table 61 says it costs two slots.

Calligraphy requires two slots.

How many proficiencies do monks and yakuza get?

The following additions/changes apply to table 56 (page 51):

Class	Initial # of Prof.	Add per level	WNPP
Monk	5	1/2	- 3
Yakuza	3	1/3	- 3

Can the explanation of the wu jen's chance to know a spell on page 25 be used in non-Oriental campaigns?

The method described on page 25 is the same as the method described in the 1st Edition *Players Handbook*, so there is no harm in using the *Oriental Adventures* explanation in non-Oriental campaigns based on the 1st Edition books. However, the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* does not allow a chance-to-learn check for a spell until it is found (see page 16 of that volume).

How do Oriental characters gain levels? Do they have to train? When do wu jen get new spells?

Oriental characters gain levels by accumulating experience and training. They must pay training costs (see page 86 of the 1st Edition *DMG* or page 49 of the 2nd

Edition *DMG*). Wu jen should gain new spells whenever they gain the ability to cast them and have access to such spells. For example, at 3rd level, a wu jen gains the ability to cast a second-level spell; he can do so if he finds a written copy of such a spell, learns it from someone else, or researches it himself *and* makes his chance-to-know roll (see page 25).

Why isn't the battle axe listed as a two-handed weapon on table 49? Battle axes were used with two hands, at least sometimes. Perhaps the battle axe should be treated like a bastard sword, with two sets of statistics.

A battle axe is not a two-handed weapon. It is true that battle axes were often used with two hands, but this was because a man without a shield did not have anything better to do with his free hand and the axe's long haft provided space for the additional grip. If you want to experiment with statistics for two-handed use, improve the speed factor and AC adjustment for all armor types by +1 and increase the damage inflicted to 3-9 (2d4 + 1). Weight, length, and space required are unchanged. The improvements reflect the extra muscle the wielder gains from using two hands.

Can gajin characters learn Oriental languages, and can Oriental characters learn gajin Common? What about characters who already have a "full load" of languages?

Any character can learn a new language if his intelligence score permits. The DM might permit a character to forget a language that has not been used for a length of time in order to allow the character to acquire a new one. Racial and alignment tongues can never be forgotten in this manner. The time required to learn the new language is up to the DM; one local campaign uses 48 weeks minus the sum of the character's intelligence and wisdom.

Is there any limit to the number of martial-arts styles a character can learn?

Theoretically, a character could have as many different martial arts styles as he had weapon proficiencies, but this would be a waste. The character would do much better to use the slots to learn weapons or special maneuvers.

The calendar on page 107 is about two weeks short. Where did the extra time go?

The Kara-Tur calendar is 356 days long, making it nine days short when compared with the calendar of the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ setting on the very same planet. "Just Making Time," an article in DRAGON® issue #123, provides a quick solution for this problem. A nine-day

festival is held between the consecutive months of Tu and Tsou, belonging to no month, which can be extended for one day every four years by imperial decree (ac-counting for leap years). The Kara-Tur zodiac has a celestial space unclaimed by any other constellation, matching this gap in the calendar.

Where is the random encounter table for dungeon adventures?

Create your own random dungeon encounter table if you wish. The monsters' section of *Oriental Adventures* (starting on page 115) and the notes on page 138 of *Monster Manual II* will get you started.

Can gajin characters use Oriental spells? Can Oriental characters use non-Oriental spells?

Page 130 of *Oriental Adventures* says that 5% of scrolls will contain gajin spells and that these may be used by Oriental characters; if you wish, you can reverse this for non-Oriental games.

At what level can a wu jen re-search new spells? What about manufacturing scrolls or other items?

Spells can be researched at any level, so long as such spells are appropriate to the researcher's level; see the 1st Edition *DMG* (pages 115-116) or 2nd Edition *DMG* (pages 43-44) for more information. The required level for making magical items varies; see the 1st Edition *DMG* (pages 116-118) or the 2nd Edition *DMG* (pages 84-88). Wu jen levels equal magic-user levels for this purpose.

The rules say that a character must learn a martial-arts style's special maneuvers in order. Yet the common styles on page 101 skip some maneuvers; tae kwon do, for instance, skips all the movement maneuvers and goes straight to number five. Please resolve this conflict.

There is no conflict at all. Any style's special maneuvers are learned in numerical order, no matter what groups they are from. In tae kwon do, for example, Movement 5 is the last maneuver learned. The character does not have to (and cannot) learn Movements 1-4 because they are not part of his style.

Do bushi-ninja get strength bonuses in combat? Can wu jen-ninja use spells while armored? When can a ninja use the ki powers from his other class? Does a ninja character get experience only when he's acting like a ninja?

It would be helpful for you to think of a ninja as a type of dual-classed character. Ninja is not an independent class; a ninja may draw upon either of his classes at any time. Bushi-ninja do get strength bonuses. Any ninja can use the skills, spells, and ki

powers of his other class within the restrictions given (e.g., a wu jen-ninja cannot cast spells while wearing armor). The DM must decide when a ninja is "acting like a ninja." The determination does not have to be exact, since it affects only experience. Generally, experience is split evenly between both classes if the ninja makes use of his ninja abilities during an adventure.

Are scale and chain mail armor both considered metallic armors, or can ninja move silently while wearing these armor types?

Metal scale and chain are both metallic armors. Leather scale is not, and so can be used for silent movement by ninja.

How do you determine which special maneuvers can be used with a created martial-arts style?

The form of the style determines which special maneuvers can be used with it. Each special maneuver on table 70 (page 103) is labeled for use with one of the forms. A special maneuver labeled *hard* is used primarily with hard styles, *hard/soft* maneuvers can be used with any style, and *soft* maneuvers are used primarily with soft styles. The special maneuvers listed under mental and physical training are labeled with the most compatible forms but may be used with any style; all other special maneuvers should be restricted to their primary style—no more than one "out of form" maneuver per style is a good rule of thumb.

How long are turns, rounds, and segments in an Oriental campaign?

The lengths of a turn, a melee round, and a segment are the same as in non-Oriental adventures; see the 1st Edition *Players Handbook* (page 31) or the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* (page 91; note that segments are not used in the AD&D 2nd Edition rules).

The rules say that the chance to perform a peaceful skill "can never be less than a 3 on 1d20" (page 52). Does this mean that a character must roll under the number given for the proficiency in order to succeed? How does a character get bonuses to his roll? Do high ability scores help? How can a character ever roll more than a 20 on 1d20?

The character must roll the number listed or better on 1d20. Three is the lowest adjusted chance for success. That is, no matter how good the character is, he will always fail on a roll of 1 or 2. Scores greater than 20 can be achieved by adding bonuses from extra slots spent in the proficiency (see page 52) or from a magical item (or both). Ability modifiers do not apply to peaceful skills.

Continued on page 58

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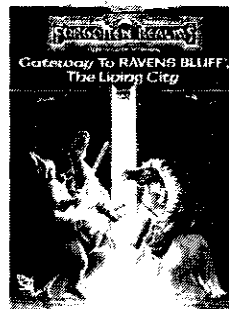
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The Ecology of the Kappa

Little things should not be taken lightly

by David R. Knowles

From the Complete Bestiary of the Reaches of Kara-Tur, of which one copy survives in the city of Waterdeep:

The Kappa

Appearance

Certainly, one of the most bizarre and dangerous of local beasts is the kappa, whose appearance is like that of a tiny, ugly boy with a distended stomach and slippery skin. Often thought to be a type of monkey because of its stance and posture while moving, the kappa is an amphibian with magical powers. An upright kappa stands, on the average, 2' tall, though a few larger ones have been seen. Female kappa are generally 6" shorter than males. Both females and males have pot bellies, each with a pouch in the abdomen similar to that of a kangaroo. Their feet look like those of a snapping turtle, having three webbed toes, and their hands are webbed and clawed. Indeed, most kappa are known to have hard shells like those of small turtles¹, and almost all kappa have scaled bodies, though occasionally they have been seen with smooth skin. Their skin is very tough and is normally green, often with yellow tinges, and is clammy, slimy, and cold to the touch because they are cold-blooded. A few are able to change the color of their skin to match their surroundings in the same manner as a chameleon, adjusting to almost any color to enable them to hide or stalk successfully².

Clothing irritates their skin, and they never wear garments, finding them silly and pointless. They have a thick layer of fat under their skin for both buoyancy and warmth, and some kappa have a small amount of body hair. They smell vaguely fishlike. Their boyish heads are fairly chubby and flat.

On the top of each kappa's head is a saucerlike depression filled with water from the kappa's home body of water. This water is the source of that kappa's strength. The kappa will lose vitality and other abilities in proportion to any amount of this water spilled from the bowl in its head, and it will die within minutes if all

the water is lost and the kappa is unable to replenish this vital fluid with fresh water from any source (though "home" water is preferred).

Around this bowl, most kappa have hair that is usually cut short, though some scholarly or artistic kappa wear it long. Kappa have large eyes with humanlike tear ducts, and though most have large beaks, some have long noses instead. All kappa are able to breathe comfortably underwater or in air; however, they have only lungs and do not have gills, taking the water in through their mouths. Their lungs filter oxygen out of the water.

There are two types of kappa: the common kappa, which is bad enough, and the vampiric kappa, whose bite drains vitality. The vampiric kappa is usually a solitary creature, preying upon all who fall within its grasp (even other kappa).

Common kappa weigh, on average, approximately 20 lbs. Vampiric kappa usually weigh slightly more. Huge kappa have been known to stand 5' tall and weigh up to 150 lbs.; these are believed to have once been experimental subjects of a wu jen³.

Abilities

Kappa are extremely strong despite their small size, and some have been known to wreck bridges, hurl rocks, and tear flesh from their opponents with their clawed hands. Kappa prefer not to use weapons, but they can throw daggers and darts if given the chance.

Kappa have lithe, supple bodies and are fluid movers, allowing them to climb and swim with great ease and grace. This grace, combined with their thick skin, makes them difficult to strike in hand-to-hand combat, adding to the dangers of fighting them in close quarters.

Additionally, each community of kappa has developed its own style of martial arts, and the kappa have become masters of their own styles. Often, these styles are based upon basic wrestling techniques in which the kappa are highly skilled. Kappa martial-arts styles usually contain many grappling moves and maneuvers designed to throw their opponents off balance.

All kappa regenerate wounds that they

have received; even their limbs can regrow quickly. Kappa may reconnect severed limbs if they are able to spend time undisturbed to allow their regenerative and recuperative powers to work. They are reputed to be masters of *koppo*, which is the knowledge of bone structures and the art of setting or breaking bones. This art may well be included in the martial combat styles of some kappa⁴.

Vampiric kappa differ from their common brethren in a number of ways. They are not undead, but they are more powerful and deadly than their kin. Their eyes are blood red but dead looking, giving little indication of emotion or intent. Their skin is more like hide, being tougher and more resilient than that of normal kappa. They are as strong and powerful as the other types of kappa, but they are more agile and much harder. This difference in physique and stamina allows vampiric kappa to move nearly as quickly as a human on dry land and gives them excellent endurance. Vampiric kappa are slightly more intelligent than normal kappa; this difference in mental power only worsens the naturally crafty and malicious attitude that kappa seem to harbor.

In addition to normal attacks, vampiric kappa also attack their prey by biting. Once this kappa has successfully bitten its victim, it will lock its jaws and not release until the victim is dead or the kappa is forced to disengage. This bite causes both physical damage and a loss of strength, and may also inflict a dreadful disease that drains strength. This disease lasts approximately six days before killing its carrier.

Folktales tell of spell-casting kappa, but nothing else is known of such matters.⁵

Habitat & Diet

Kappa most often live in rivers but also inhabit deep streams, lakes, and large ponds—almost any suitably large body of fresh water. Kappa die from extended exposure to saltwater, being unable to tolerate it for longer than a few hours". Often making their lairs around rocky outcrops and bridges, they use these areas as solid, defensible bases from which to scavenge. On occasion, these lairs may contain magical items and treasures such as gold and jewelry, all gained from the demise of their victims. In fact, kappa are a major cause of drownings in fresh water in Kara-Tur, as they delight in dragging unsuspecting human and animal victims into their waterways. Kappa can see perfectly underwater, having strong transparent protective coverings over their eyes.

All kappa consider themselves gourmets. They normally live on fish, but they are especially fond of cucumbers and melons such as cantaloupes, muskmelons, and the like. Some kappa have a special taste for fruits such as oranges or grapes, but some hate sweet fruits with a passion. (No one has yet tried to feed pickles to a kappa.) They are also very fond of horse, cow, and human flesh. Their normal method of

eating slain animals is to suck out the entrails of their victims. Kappa have been known to indulge in *sake* (rice wine) or plum brandy; such beverages have been used to bribe even the destructive kappa into temporary truces.

Society

A group of kappa usually has two to six members, though larger groups do exist. What little society kappa share works much as an extended family whose members are bound to one another by social obligations more than by blood. These bonds, however, do not interfere with each kappa's independent, ruthless, and predatory behavior. (Vampiric kappa almost never live in groups, preferring solitude or living with a mate only.)

Courting among kappa is initiated by the females, who chase their chosen males vigorously until the former's advances are accepted. Once established, partnerships are usually permanent. Males outnumber females, though only by a small margin, and the females are equal to the males in their abilities, strengths, and aggressive natures. Young are hatched from tiny eggs that are kept hidden within the pouches of their parents (males, however, sometimes eat the eggs they carry).

Kappa are believed to have a lifespan similar to humans, although they develop their skills and abilities at a younger age in comparison to humans⁸. The most obvious example is that their babies can walk and talk at hatching and very quickly learn to swim well.

Almost all kappa have, even from a very early age, full literacy in their own language and usually in those tongues spoken commonly in their lands. They are able to speak, read, and write with great eloquence in "kappanese," although they are somewhat less capable in other languages. The script of the kappa is very spindly and spiral; it is not aesthetically pleasing but rather is disturbing to the human eye and difficult to read by nonkappa.

As a race, kappa are inventive and clever within their own lifestyle, but they are no more intelligent than human beings, often exhibiting lesser intelligence. As with any intelligent creature, there are exceptions to this, and a few intelligent (even brilliant) kappa have been discovered. These kappa use brain-power to manipulate others to achieve their goals.

Kappa are self-centered and self-motivated to the exclusion of the opinions and ideals of others. One unexpected aspect of their personalities comes to light when they are in trouble or somehow compromised. They fawn on the people who have cornered them, and nothing is too much trouble for a kappa in this situation. Rumors exist of captured, grateful, or indebted kappa teaching some or all of their skills to whomever controlled them. All kappa thoroughly enjoy the pain and discomfort of others and are great practical jokers, especially if the joke ends in

disaster for their victims. Kappa sometimes assault lone travelers for no reason other than to cause them misery, greeting the victim with great formality just before the attack. This malicious streak stems from a kappa's complete and utter disregard for anyone or anything else.

Travelers and local inhabitants attempt to appease kappa by throwing food into kappa waters. Village folk write the names of their family members on these gifts so the kappa know who should not be attacked. Another way to pass the lair of a kappa without being attacked is to offer to wrestle the kappa for the right of passage. As all kappa are skilled wrestlers, they will often agree to this. However, if a kappa defeats his opponent, he will almost always drag the victim into his lair to be eaten at his leisure.

Kappa are extremely polite, even to their prey, but they make their intentions well known. If treated with great respect, a kappa might be swayed from slaying and eating its victim, but it will certainly demand immediate payment of money or valuable belongings in return for sparing the victim's life.

Given to such exhibitions of extreme behavior, all kappa regard odd and seemingly meaningless acts as perfectly normal. To a human being, a kappa's lifestyle would appear random, thoughtless, and devoid of almost anything other than self-gratification. This is perfectly true, and kappa not only admit to this but take pride in it. Their rarity is, perhaps, their only blessing.

Footnotes

1. About 10% of all common kappa lack shells, having a base armor class of 3. Such kappa are always solitary, being bullied by other kappa.

2. Assume that 5% of all kappa have this chameleon power, which gives them a 75% chance to hide in natural terrain.

3. Assume that there is a 5% chance that a particular kappa is a huge one; double its hit dice, movement rates, damage (giving it a strength of 19 with huge claws), and height (4-5'). These huge kappa are always solitary and extremely rare. Huge vampiric kappa are, as one would imagine, incredibly dangerous; these specimens drain two strength points per round that they can bite.

4. The special maneuvers Crushing Blow and Eagle Claw come to mind here.

5. Spell-casting ability exists in approximately 10% of all male kappa. Each may cast as many spells per day as a wu jen with as many levels as the kappa has hit dice. For example, a vampiric kappa would be able to cast four first-, three second-, two third-, and one fourth-level wu jen spells. These spells need not be chosen at the beginning of a day, nor do they have to be learned from a scroll or book, since they come from the kappa's elemental sympathy with water. A kappa may cast

spells only within one mile of his own waterway. Spells should be chosen as needed. If a kappa has lost any water from the bowl in his head, his spells' durations and effects are reduced by the same degree as the amount of water lost. Spell-casting kappa may choose any spell listed as "Water" or "All" from page 73 of the *Oriental Adventures* tome.

6. Nonvampiric kappa lose 1-4 hp per turn they are immersed in saltwater; vampiric kappa lose only 1 hp per turn. Furthermore, if the water in the bowl on their heads is filled with saltwater, they gain no special strength, though they can still regenerate wounds and do not lose 2 hp per round, as per *Oriental Adventures*, page 124.

7. If six individuals are indicated by a die roll, allow a 50% chance that there are another 1-6 individuals present. If another six is rolled, allow another 50% chance for 1-6 more kappa, and so forth.

8. Common kappa typically live to an age of 100 years, and vampiric ones live to 130. From birth, kappa gain 1 HD per year until they reach adulthood.

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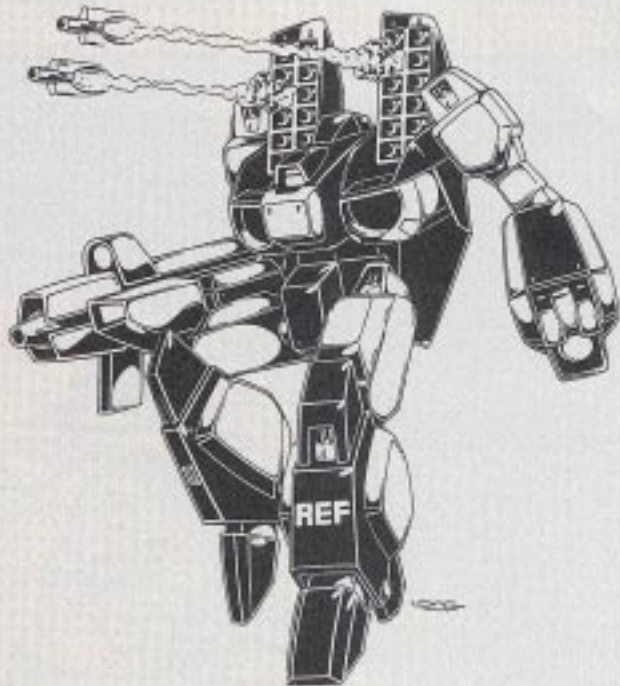
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Illustration by Jim Holloway

Soldiers of the Law

When you need help, call for O.A. Law – *Oriental Adventures Law*

by Dan Salas

The cities of Kara-Tur are alive with danger. Samurai warriors are ready to draw swords at the slightest insult. Bushi and ronin samurai start trouble to test or display their fighting skills. Kensai duels erupt suddenly and end just as quickly. Yakuza thugs make their demands at knife point to terrified commoners. A wu jen takes action to defend his honor against someone who has mistaken him for a peasant. How do the craftsmen and merchants conduct their businesses under all the flashing swords and flying arrows?

Police forces are necessary to keep order in the cities of *Oriental Adventures* campaigns. PCs might be accustomed to tavern brawls and street duels unhindered by the law, but what would happen if every NPC was allowed such freedom? The result would be a wasteland of burned buildings and dead bodies. Only an alert, aggressive police force can prevent such a disaster.

The ruling clan of each territory maintains its own police force within its own boundaries. This force is commonly one of two types: military police drawn from the regular army, or local police made up of commoners, mercenaries, and a few soldiers. In either case, the police are always backed up by the army in emergencies. All types of lawmen serve as military police with jurisdiction over commoners, travelers, strangers, and the clan's warriors.

Against such crimes as theft, assault, murder, and duelling (which is considered by samurai warlords to be a waste of manpower), the police act swiftly. Their dedication to uphold the law is as serious as a samurai's loyalty to his lord.

Hierarchy of lawmen

The organization of the law courts is described in *Oriental Adventures* (page 140). On the street level, the warriors are arranged as follows:

The town commissioner is the Chief of Police for a single town or city. He is often a bushi of 7th-9th level, though in major settlements (such as a city or strategically important town) he is a samurai of 9th-12th level. He supervises the police of the settlement, examines reports of illegal activities in the area, and determines which criminals are to be apprehended. Occasionally, he personally helps to arrest a major criminal or a suspected (and resistant) official. A samurai town commissioner always has at least 3d10 samurai

under his command, along with the bushi police.

Beneath the town commissioner are the common policemen. They are often called watchmen or patrolmen, and these names explain their most common duty. Military police consist of samurai soldiers (1st and 2nd levels) and samurai officers (3rd-5th levels), while local police consist of bushi warriors (1st-3rd levels) and samurai or bushi officers. Up to 25% of these bushi are commoners who have been given the warrior's right to use weapons, though upon reaching 4th level, a bushi-commoner becomes a full-class warrior.

Secretly employed by the police are the *censors*. These undercover agents are ninja/bushi, ninja/yakuza, and genin ninja (see *DRAGON*® issue #121, "The Genin"). Rarely drawn from normal ninja clans, these agents are employed directly by the samurai clan's leaders. Their jobs are to gather information for the police and to watch the police themselves for corruption and conspiracy. Along with their ninja abilities, the abilities of NPC censors include the ability to investigate as yakuza and to interrogate prisoners.

Lowest in rank are the *era* policemen: zero-level bushi with 2-5 hp each. The *eta* are given the worst jobs: prison guarding, executions, and the guarding of characters who are paraded publicly as punishment.

Into the melee

The armor and weapons of the police are specialized to their needs. Combat is a constant threat but rarely a daily reality for a lawman, so a warrior cannot simply be transferred from the battlefield to the street and called a policeman.

Full suits of armor are affordable only by rich officers and are worn only in the most extreme situations. On a typical day of patrols, the lawmen wear padded armor and small metal helmets. For dangerous tasks in which combat is expected, the officers wear chain mail armor or, more rarely, full suits of armor.

Eta police carry only spears. All other policemen have at least one sword, while policemen who are not commoners wear the two swords (katana and wakizashi) that their warrior status permits. The police also use man catchers, hooked spears, and sode garamis. Man catchers are clumsy to carry, so are used only when a specific criminal is sought. Hooked spears can be used for martial-arts special

maneuvers; each lawman has a 5% chance per level of knowing Weapon Catch; if capable of that maneuver, he has a 5% chance per level of knowing Weapon Breaker. Sode garamis can be used to entangle a loose sleeve or pants leg; a normal to-hit roll is necessary, then the victim attacks at -4 to hit and -2 to damage. These penalties are cumulative when an opponent is entangled by more than one sode garami.

Each officer carries a jitte as a status symbol. The jitte can be used for Weapon Catch and Weapon Breaker. Officers are often creative in their preferences for weapons, so it is not unusual for one to wield a chain weapon, lasso, or whip, all intended to entangle an opponent without causing harm.

Since they prefer to capture live prisoners, many policemen are skilled in unarmed combat, especially jujutsu. Each lawman has a 20% chance per level of knowing a martial art and is then skilled in one special maneuver per two class levels.

When encountering criminals, lawmen will first attempt to capture the offenders for judgment in the courts. They will demand the criminals' peaceful surrender. If disobeyed, the police will attempt to disarm, entangle, or subdue the lawbreakers. Note that when NPC samurai, kensai, and ninja are subdued, they usually attempt suicide by seppuku, leaping over a ledge or cliff, or any other fatal maneuver. The chance of this reaction is 5% per level, plus the NPC's honor score. The NPC must be physically restrained from the self-destructive act or will automatically succeed (this does *not* apply to PCs, who may act as they wish).

As a last resort, the police use deadly force with their edged weapons. On rare occasions, they use long bows against dangerous criminals. When faced with overwhelming odds, the town commissioner can appeal to the local daimyo for military support. This request is rarely denied.

Good versus Evil

An uneasy relationship exists between a city's police force and the yakuza gangs. Where both sides are equal in strength, the best reactions between the two groups are suspicion and tolerance. Where the yakuza are stronger, the police tend to be tough in appearance but timid in their encounters with the gangs. Where the

police are stronger, they are strict toward the commoners and brutal toward the criminals, striking violently at the gangs at every chance.

Whether they are yakuza or policemen, the number of protectors in a settlement can drastically affect the encounters there. Where there are few protectors, crime and violence are everyday problems. People tend to be suspicious and prone to violent reactions in self defense. Commoners live in fear of the bullies and short-tempered warriors who wander the streets. As for equipment and goods for sale, quality is poor and quantity is low because the merchants don't like to risk their necks in dangerous settlements. The few merchants who conduct business in such places always surround themselves with a bodyguard of bushi and ronin samurai.

In well-protected settlements, the commoners thrive amidst the law and order. Rich merchants bring the best equipment to the markets, while craftsmen and farmers sell their goods with little fear of strangers' weapons. Only the most violent or foolish warriors unleash their combat skills without good reason.

Sample encounters

The following encounters will help to establish the police in any Oriental AD&D campaign city, though only the first two should be used regularly.

The gate watch: At every main city gate are 2-5 watchmen. Small cities and towns may have fewer guards. These men keep watch on all peasants, travelers, and samurai who pass through the gate.

In Shou Lung, the guards take action only against wanted criminals or if there is trouble. Otherwise, they remain patiently at their posts.

In Wa, written passes are required for travel through a main city gate and sometimes through a district gate (especially a castle district). These papers are to be presented by important people such as officials and samurai, not by clergy or peasants. The passes must be signed or approved by the lord of the settlement.

In T'u Lung and Kozakura, the guards question characters if the characters look suspicious (e.g., are heavily armed foreigners, are carrying drawn swords and bows with knocked arrows, are displaying unusual magical talents, etc.). As the characters answer questions, the guards make reaction checks until a *hostile* or *friendly* reaction is reached. *Hostile* means that the guards will not allow the characters to pass through the gate; *friendly* means that the guards allow them to pass.

In T'u Lung, the guards can be bribed by persons whom they are questioning. The cost is typically one tael per watchman and two tael per officer. That cost is doubled if the guards have already showed a *hostile* reaction. In any other country, an attempt to bribe is an insult to the guards' honor.

Wandering patrols: Watchmen travel in groups of 2-5. Each turn, there is a 25% chance that a group wanders down any given street. These men keep watch on everything that happens around them. If there is open combat in a street or within hearing range of the street, make the check twice each turn. Unless the fight is an approved vendetta duel, the police demand that the offenders cease hostilities. If disobeyed, the police enter combat to capture the offenders.

Prison: Each city or large town has a single-room prison where captured criminals are detained. The prison is usually located at the edge of the city, often near an eta community. Depending on its size, each prison is guarded by 5-20 eta and half as many bushi, all overseen by a bushi officer. At any time, there are 20-80 people under guard, depending on the size of the settlement and the country (e.g., T'u Lung has more prisoners due to its corrupt society, while Kozakura has fewer prisoners because the police are free to use deadly force at their discretion, with no questions asked).

Mistaken identity: A group of watchmen surround the PCs in the street. Though the police do not attack, they hold out their weapons in defensive positions. Within a few rounds, an officer arrives, looks at the PCs, and declares that they are not the criminals he seeks. He apologizes for the mistake and he and his men hurry away. If the PCs push a fight, the police will assume that they are guilty and will attempt to capture them for transfer to the prison.

Public execution: A crowd of peasants surrounds a wooden platform where criminals await execution. At least one officer and six patrolmen conduct the event, while eta police perform the actual slayings. Thieves, murderers, pirates, and other low-life villains are boiled alive in huge pots of oil, while yakuza characters receive fast beheadings. On rare occasions, the PCs may recognize some of the criminals as old friends, acquaintances, or needed sources of information. A rescue might be in order.

The trapped fugitive: The PCs see a crowd of peasants in one of the streets. Upon closer inspection, they find a dozen police and a half-dozen soldiers surrounding a building (an inn, teahouse, merchant's walled compound, or whatever). The lawmen have cornered a dangerous fugitive but are afraid to storm the building. The fugitive might be a high-level member of any character class, especially a kensai, monk, samurai, or wu jen. Also, the fugitive might be holding a kidnapped child, rich merchant, or Maiden of Virtue. The police will not ask for help, but they will accept the PCs' offer of assistance if the PCs charge a reasonable price. If no PC attempts to help, the lawmen charge into the building and kill the fugitive, losing half their men in the process.

Collective responsibility: A desperate criminal bursts into the PCs' inn room and begs for help. The criminal might be a luckless commoner, a low-level yakuza, a treacherous ninja, a pretty girl, or other appropriate unfortunate. If possible, the NPC will offer a valuable reward for the PCs' help. Soon after, the police arrive and demand to search the rooms. If the PCs are caught trying to protect the criminal, they become outlaws themselves.

The informer: If the PCs become involved in illegal activities, they find that the police remain one step ahead of them. Lawmen appear at the most inopportune times to foul up the PCs' plans. Somewhere, an informer is spying on the PCs. The informer might be a beggar, a shopkeeper, or even one of the yakuza with whom the PCs are dealing. Occasionally, the informer is a censor who watches unseen from the rooftops or under various disguises.

Strike force: As the PCs encounter the local yakuza clans, they are surprised by the appearance of a police strike force. This group is assigned to capture (if not kill) an upper-level yakuza leader. The police fight only with characters who get in the way of their goal. Depending on the hunted yakuza's level and guards, the strike force can consist of 5-20 watchmen and one or two officers. All are dressed in as much armor as possible. Rarely, 10-20 regular soldiers assist in the capture of a boss or underboss.

War in the streets: The police and yakuza forces are involved in increasingly violent encounters in the streets. Rumors abound that the censors and the yakuza killers are fighting a war of assassinations. The reason for the conflict is not clear. Perhaps the lawmen executed an underboss or the yakuza thugs beat up the town commissioner's brother. The war has affected the entire city, filling it with terror. Men on both sides become violent at a moment's notice, and the commoners are caught between them. However, the yakuza gangs are doomed, since a troop of heavily armed foot soldiers will eventually arrive to restore order. Many yakuza are already deserting the city, though most will fight until the end, even if they must go into hiding for a few years. The PCs might be recruited into either side of the war, or they might get into trouble on both sides. Their own actions will determine how the conflict affects them.

Rewards of service

Many adventures can develop when the PCs perform their own police activities. They can join an existing police force or form their own force where none exists. Upon reaching 9th level, a samurai PC might be offered the position of town commissioner in a city. Note that this job is roughly equal in power to the stewardship offered at 7th level. However, it commands as much respect as the job of constable because crime fighting is a tougher, more

dangerous job. A constable rarely, draws his sword in combat, while a town commissioner often deals with the possibility of such an occurrence.

Normally, the local government pays four tael per level per month to its policemen, double that to officers, and triple to town commissioners. However, the true rewards are the honor points and experience points to be gained.

The Honor Awards table herein lists honor-point awards for characters employed by an officially recognized police force. Experience points must be gained from encounters with the thugs, troublemakers, yakuza gangs, ninja clans, and common criminals of the settlement. The PCs can declare an all-out war to "clean up the town," or they can seek a peaceful (if uneasy) compromise with the gangs. The PCs are sure to find that crime fighting is one of the most dangerous and thrilling occupations in Kara-Tur!

Honor Awards: Oriental Police

Circumstance

Has proficiency in martial arts
Takes a bribe
Makes false arrest
Lets prisoners escape
Retrieves stolen goods
Saves a life
Discovers true identity of a ninja NPC
Discovers true identity of a yakuza NPC
Captures a wanted criminal
Crushes a yakuza gang
Solves a minor crime
Solves a major crime

Award

+ 1 per two special maneuvers
- 1
- 3
- 1 per prisoner
+ 1 per 100 ch'ien value
+ 5
+ 1 per two ninja levels
+ 1 per two yakuza levels
+ 1 per two levels of criminal
+ 1 per 20 disbanded yakuza
+ 2
+ 5

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M25	Giant Snake	40p
M27	Troll Chief	£1.25
M29	Troll Archer	75p
M31	Vampire	50p
M34	Death Demon	95p
M37	Frankenstein Monster	75p
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M40	Troll Champion	£2.50
M43	Griffon	£2.50
M44	Djin	£1.00
M45	Ogre Skull (2)	20p
M47	Wraith	50p
M48	Baby Dragon	60p
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M57	Giant Wolf	75p
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M59	Giant Ape	95p
M60	Weasel	50p
M61	Lizardman + Sword	50p
M62	Giant Tick	45p
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Earn Those Heirlooms!

Only the honorable should inherit the goods

by Jay Oufts

Between the covers of *Oriental Adventures* exists a very troublesome set of rules: the dreaded birthrights in Table 40, page 34. As the rules stand now, players of lucky die rolls and distinguished birth have a chance to begin their adventuring careers with armor or weapons of quality, large amounts of cash, shares of the family's productive property, or even magical weapons. Acquisition of these goodies is absolutely free; there is no risk involved and no special service required. This can give a DM a real headache, for these rules give neophyte Oriental characters an advantage over most low-level monsters. Besides, characters with three or more birthrights may dominate the party, and this is not good. On the other hand, birthrights do allow some characters to start off with a bit of extra cash which, given the high cost of equipment in the Far East, can be very useful. Thus, completely discarding the system is not the answer. If the rules were modified so that one would inherit his heirlooms gradually, the system would work much better.

Having players earn their heirlooms instead of acquiring them on a silver platter is not as unreasonable as it may sound; in fact, it make perfect sense. After all, why should a character's elders hand over the family's most prized possessions simply because one of their dear children is beginning a life of danger and adventure? One well-placed hit from a bakemono's naginata and all of those treasured heirlooms, not to mention the beloved kinsman, are lost. Besides, being selected to inherit such treasures is an honor due only to those who have first proven themselves worthy. Until characters have done so, all heirlooms (and, as a result, any honor and experience that accompany them) should be retained by their elders.

The rules proposed here introduce the concept of inheritance points. Inheritance points, or IP are an abstract way of measuring whether or not a character has proven himself honorable enough to inherit any heirlooms due him; they are, in effect, simply used to "buy" birthrights. Inheritance points may be obtained in one of two ways. First, one starts with the number of IP equal to the sum of one-half his family honor (round fractions up) plus one-half his personal honor (again, round up), divided by 10 (round down). Second, one receives $\frac{1}{2}$ IP for each point of honor gained. The opposite is also true; one loses $\frac{1}{2}$ IP for each point of honor lost; however, losing honor affects neither birth-

rights inherited nor birthrights due. Characters entitled to no birthrights never receive IP. Note that fractions are retained and that it is possible to have fewer than zero IP.

Inheritance points are awarded at the same time as honor points. They may be spent immediately, or they may be saved. There is, however, a particular order in which birthrights must be purchased, as will be discussed shortly.

Players should roll for honor, caste, families, and numbers of rolls on the birthrights table as outlined in the rules. However, use the Expanded Birthrights Table presented here and record the results under the heading "Birthrights Due." When an heirloom is inherited, simply deduct the cost of the item from the character's current IP total.

Cash strings, if any, must be obtained before anything else. Fen are obtained first, followed by yuan, tael, and ch'ien, respectively. If there is more than one set of a particular coin (two sets of yuan, for example), the set with the fewest coins is obtained first. Most cash strings cost 1 IP each; ch'ien cash strings, however, cost 2 IP each.

Once all cash strings have been inherited, horses are inherited. Should a PC be entitled to more than one set of horses, he gets the set with the fewest horses first. Each set costs 2 IP. The horses may be of any type the player desires, but they all lack saddle and tack.

Inheritance of any suit of armor of quality follows; each suit or piece costs 3 IP. Should a character be lucky enough to be due more than one set, he gets the one with the least protection first. Should a character be unable to use armor, allow him to reroll. Determine the type of armor randomly.

Weapons of quality follow armor. Allow the character to select the table on page 132 (tables 80 through 85, inclusive) on which he would like to roll. The weapon itself must be determined randomly. Should the character get a weapon he is not allowed to use, allow him to reroll. If a character is entitled to more than one weapon, he may select the one he wants to inherit first. Weapons of quality cost 3 IP.

Magical weapons are inherited next. Magical items cost 2 IP plus 1 IP per magical bonus; thus, a + 1 weapon costs 3 IP. Should a character be eligible to receive more than one magical weapon, he must receive the one worth the fewest IP first; in the event of a tie, he may select the

weapon he wants first. The type of weapon is determined in the same manner as a weapon of quality. There is a 5% chance that such a weapon is +3 to hit and damage, a 35% chance that it is +2, and a 60% chance that it is + 1.

Famous works of art (which come next in the order of inheritance) include paintings, sculptures, pottery, or jewelry by the most famous artisans. If the character had a famous artisan in his ancestry, each work of art was crafted by that ancestor. Such treasures are worth $4d10 \times 1,000$ tael, and each work costs 4 IP. Should a PC be in line to inherit more than one artwork, he gets the least valuable one first.

Finally, the character may inherit property shares. Each share costs 4 IP. No one may possess more than a 30% share of a single property. If a player gets more than the 30% limit, or if his family owns no productive property, treat the roll as "no result." Property shares earn two honor points for the first 10% share and one for each 10% share thereafter.

Remember, deduct the character's birth order from the number of rolls allowed on the birthrights table. However, the oldest child always gets at least one roll.

Note that in the case of cash strings and horses, it is possible that more than one such item will be called for by a single roll in the results. In these cases, all such items are inherited at once. Thus, if a player rolls a 55 and a 95, he gets two sets of yuan cash strings. One set may have only one string while the other has three, but each set costs only 1 IP.

Example: Yingtze Xio-Tung is allowed five rolls on the birthrights table and gains two strings of fen, a suit of quality chain mail, three more strings of fen, two horses, and two strings of tael. His family honor is 31; his personal honor is 22. Therefore, he starts with 2 IP as $[(31/2) + (22/2)]/10 = 2.65$. He decides to immediately spend these on the fen, using 1 IP for each set. Note that he could saved his IPs for later, had he wished, or he could have spent only 1 IP to purchase the first set of fen. He could not, however, have used the IP to acquire the tael, the horses, or the chain mail until all of the fen had been acquired.

During a playing session, Xio-Tung is invited to serve under a powerful lord and later saves the life of his master at great risk to himself, thus earning seven honor points. This results in the simultaneous gain of $3 \frac{1}{2}$ IP. He immediately spends 1 IP to acquire the tael and 2 IP for the horses.

This leaves him with ½ IP. Since his horses are worth one honor point, they are also worth ½ IP. Xio-Tung ends the session with 1 IP.

During his next adventure, Xio-Tung loses a contest. Being a poor sport, he accuses the judges of foul play and throws a temper tantrum in public. To make things worse, his rival accuses him of a theft he did not commit. These events bring a loss of seven honor points (one for losing the contest, two for improper social behavior, and four for being accused of a crime) and 3 ½ IP. Thus, he ends the day with — 2 ½ IP.

With the rules presented here, 1st-level characters will no longer walk about with a full arsenal of magical weapons, valuable property, or large amounts of cash simply because of a few lucky rolls of the dice. Game balance is preserved. In addition, players will be forced to take honor even more seriously, especially those in proud families who have much to inherit. Each moment of honor and glory brings one a step closer to his next inheritance, and each moment of shame and defeat sets him a step back.

Ω

Expanded Birthrights Table

1d100	Result	Honor	IP cost
01-03	Nil	n/a	n/a
04	Reroll; use next higher die*	n/a	n/a
05	Nil	n/a	n/a
06	Property share (10-30%)	**	4
07	Reroll; use next higher die*	n/a	n/a
08	Property share (10-30%)	**	4
09-16	Nil	n/a	n/a
17-18	Property share (10-30%)	**	4
19	One horse	0	2
20	1-4 cash strings (fen)	n/a	1
21-30	Nil	n/a	n/a
31-33	Armor of quality	2	3
34-40	Nil	n/a	n/a
41-45	Property share (10-30%)	**	4
46-50	Nil	n/a	n/a
51-53	1-6 cash strings (fen)	n/a	1
54-55	1-6 cash strings (yuan)	n/a	1
56-60	Property share (10-30%)	**	4
61-63	Weapon of quality	2	3
64-70	Nil	n/a	n/a
71-75	Armor of quality	2	3
76-80	2-5 horses	1	2
81-84	Famous work of art	2	4
85-87	Nil	n/a	n/a
88-91	1-6 cash strings (tael)	n/a	1
92-94	2-9 cash strings (tael)	n/a	1
95	1-4 cash strings (ch'ien)	n/a	2
96-98	Weapon of quality	2	3
99	Magical weapon	**	**
00	Reroll; add + 10 to result	n/a	n/a

* "Use next higher die" means 1d4 becomes 1d6, 1d6 becomes 1d8, etc. If using 1d100, add + 10 to the roll.

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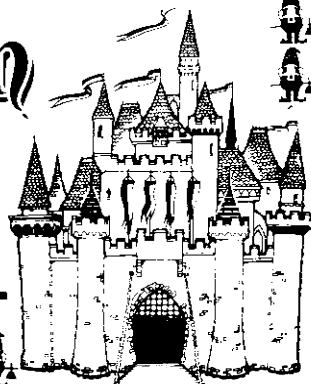
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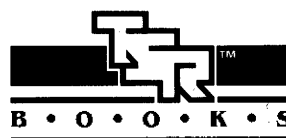
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Illustration by Jim Holloway

The Dragon's Bestiary

Never forget, never forgive: the wang-liang

by Sylvia Li

Wang-Liang

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*
NO. APPEARING: *1 (see text)*
ARMOR CLASS: *4 (improved by armor)*
MOVE: *12"*
HIT DICE: *6 + 3 to 8 + 3 (see Table 1)*
% IN LAIR: *10% (see above)*
TREASURE TYPE: *Variable*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *2 claws*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1-10/1-10*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Magical devices*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Regeneration, detect invisibility, psionic invisibility, limited spell immunity, polymorph self, magical devices*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Exceptional to genius*
ALIGNMENT: *Lawful evil*
SIZE: *L (10')*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *See text*

The wang-liang are closely related to the ogre magi, being exceptionally intelligent and long-lived, with their own unique brand of magic. They are implacably hostile to human beings and rarely pass up a chance to kill, injure, humiliate, or frighten them. Toward humans, their behavior is destructive; among their own kind, there are no known instances of cruelty to each other. The wang-liang pay their debts and keep their promises. Other nonhuman races are treated as humans if they are accompanied by humans. If non-humans are encountered without humans, the wang-liang do not initiate hostilities.

There is good reason for their hatred of humans. Wang-liang have a long lifespan—about 2,000 years—but with a corresponding low birthrate. They are intelligent enough to extrapolate the human ability to multiply and the human disregard for long-term consequences, and so have long been able to predict their own extinction. They are not charitable enough to forgive humanity and go quietly. They are bitter.

Physically, they are tall (10'), carnivorous beings with soft pelts of lustrous dark brown or black hair. Their eyes are wide and large, having black irises rimmed with luminous, fiery red. They have the sharp, pointed teeth of a carnivore (doing 1d4 hp damage if needed), but biting is not their natural attack form. The teeth are set in a protruding and delicate muzzle.

Wang-liang are very strong (each with 18-percentile strength) and have good

natural armor class and weaponry. The retractable claws don't cut like swords; instead, they operate with a scooping action that tears off chunks of flesh.

Their home territory is among forested mountains, but single individuals may be found anywhere—on a country road, in towns and cities, even ranging as far as the lands of the gajin.

Wang-liang are not savages. They have their own civilization. They wear clothes or, if going into battle, various kinds of armor that modify their armor classes as appropriate. They can use the full range of swords, spears, bows, and pole arms available to human bushi but in a larger size. They do not use iron or steel, but they have a method of hardening bronze to make it nearly as hard as low-grade iron. Despite the larger weapon sizes, the quality of the metal limits damage to standard by weapon type, with strength bonuses. Weapons and armor used by these creatures should be determined by the DM as desired.

There is no difference in strength or fighting ability between adult males and females, but individuals encountered may range from 6 + 3 HD to 8 + 3 HD depending on fighting experience (use Table 1). Wang-liang do not have classes and do not advance in levels with experience but gain hit dice instead.

Wang-liang know the human passion for gold, silver, and gems, but they do not share that passion. In fact, they find greed to be repulsive. They are, however, quite willing to use this human weakness as a tool for manipulation, and for that reason they sometimes carry gems or other items that would be valued by humans. Amounts carried should be determined by the DM.

Like their better-known relatives the ogre magi, wang-liang are not considered "persons" for the technical purposes of such spells as *charm person* or *hold person*. Their innate abilities are similar to those of the ogre magi, though not quite as powerful. They can *regenerate* wounds at the rate of 1 hp per round while conscious; they can *polymorph* into any human or humanlike form (4-12' tall); they can easily see creatures and things rendered *invisible* either magically or psionically; and they can become psionically *invisible* at will to certain total numbers of

hit dice of creatures (see Table 2). These abilities do not require concentration to begin or to maintain. The wang-liang also have a limited telepathic ability that functions only between members of their own race. This has a range of about 33 miles outdoors but is blocked by stone walls. This telepathy requires concentration.

In addition, they nearly always carry various magical items of their own. These are of two sorts: items bestowing useful magical abilities for the wang-liang's own use, and cursed magical items for "trade" with humans.

One useful magical item common among wang-liang is a straw hat that bestows magical *invisibility*, just like the ring in the *DMG*. (This lets them combine the effects of magical and psionic *invisibility* to become extremely hard to detect.) There may also be some fairly powerful offensive magical items, some of unique design. Any item of useful wang-liang magic is subject to one serious inconvenience: The wang-liang will not permit anyone other than a wang-liang to keep or use such an item. They will always try to recover a lost or stolen item, and they will not give up until they have succeeded. The DM should feel quite creative in designing such items, using those from the *DMG* as bases to work from.

The other category is of "trade" magical items, designed for the specific purpose of being palmed off on unsuspecting humans. To call them cursed would be like saying that Juiblex is ugly: While true enough, it doesn't quite cover the full scope of the situation. These are highly ingenious, vicious, and imaginative practical jokes, no two of them alike. DM fiendishness is encouraged.

Think of it from the wang-liang point of view. Suppose you have a lifetime of a couple of thousand years in which to wander around a world infested with stupid, greedy, treacherous, despicable scum who don't deserve to take over the world but are going to do it anyway. There's really no point in killing them. Humans do a better job of killing each other than you possibly could, arranging battles that slaughter hundreds of thousands—yet 50 years later, they're just as numerous as they were before.

No matter what you do, it won't help in

the long run. So you amuse yourself by selecting individuals to torment. You don't really care whom you choose as your victim; they're all humans. Maybe you'll dismember one here or there, but there's not much satisfaction in that as they die much too easily. Besides, a physical attack lays you open to physical retaliation, and you aren't suicidal.

So you distribute booby-trapped magical items. Whether lethal or otherwise, they are designed to embarrass and humiliate or else to terrify (and possibly to kill). You're getting even, either way.

For example, here's an item adapted from an actual folk tale: a magical boot which, the victim is told, can make the wearer feel as rested and refreshed as though he had just had a full night's sleep. However, when this is tested, the victim finds that the boot transforms into a coffin enveloping him. Not only that, but within a single round, the coffin sinks 6' underground. If the victim is alone, this is the end of him. If friends dig him up and break open the coffin, they find him in a state of suspended animation that cannot be distinguished from death except that the body does not decay. The spell can be broken only by destroying the coffin. Meanwhile, the victim's spirit wanders the lands of the dead somewhere on the outer planes, where he may meet influences either kindly or malevolent. If one of these spiritual encounters proves fatal, his body also dies.

The parameters for designing a "trade" item are as follows: The item must be something the wang-liang can easily carry without danger or inconvenience to himself; there must be a way to activate it or (preferably) to trick the victim into activating it; lethal results are okay, but nearly-lethal results are better, and humiliation is best of all; the more flashy and flamboyant the better; and the device should not be reusable. (Some jokes are only funny once.)

A few individuals among the wang-hang may be prepared to admit that humanity is only 98% scum, and that very rare humans might have one or two redeeming qualities. That's about as far as they'll go toward friendliness. If a wang-liang finds himself unavoidably obligated to a particular human (e.g., saved from a fate worse than death), he may repay the obligation, by his own standards, by telling the human some of the above information and warning the human not to accept magical items from his people.

The biological fact that has ensured the eventual extinction of the wang-liang under the ecological pressure of expanding human populations is very simple: No wang-liang female can give birth more than once in her lifetime. Normally, there are two young born at this time, a male and a female. Very rarely, about as often as identical twins occur among humans, there are four infants instead. The time

from birth to maturity is about 40 years. However, a female may not be ready to mate and give birth for hundreds of years after she reaches maturity.

While their young are immature, a mated pair is impelled by instinct and tradition to live in seclusion in the wild, using only their natural abilities to survive and to care for the young. This early experience ensures that every wang-liang is at home in the wilderness. They are *invisible* during most of this time. A family grouping of four (or, rarely, six) individuals, called a "pod," is under the fiercest protection of every member of the race. Harm done by any human to wang-liang in this most vulnerable phase of their lives will be avenged in a ratio of 100 human deaths for each wang-liang killed.

The period of caring for the young in the wilderness is apparently viewed by wang-liang as the happiest time of their lives; a short, idyllic interlude of perfect intimacy. Once the young have reached adulthood, they join wang-liang society. The young adults band together for mutual protection and live in remote areas in groups of 50-150. Here, they build structures, engage in handicrafts, make weapons and tools, raise domesticated deer for food, and provide the broad structural base of the wang-liang civilization. The average intelligence of wang-liang is very high, and they are able to adopt human devices or invent their own. The apparent simplicity of their lives does not mean that the wang-liang are primitive.

The time a young female spends in this village environment varies from one individual to another. In extreme cases, it may be as short as 20 years or as long as 1,300 years. The average period is about 400 years. When her time comes to mate, the female knows it instinctively, and she chooses a mate from among the young males in the village. (There is a recorded instance in T'u Lung of a sorcerer who, out of curiosity, managed to kidnap and imprison a young female wang-liang just as she entered this phase. According to his notes, she appeared to suffer greatly over a period of several months, pleaded incessantly for release, and was on the verge of expiring when his notes abruptly ended.) A wang-liang male remains in the village until he is chosen by a female.

Parents still have many years of life ahead of them after their offspring have been placed in a suitable village. They do not remain together.

The talent to learn magic is present in the race only among some of the older females. These retire to an Elder Circle where they are supported by all the villages in their efforts to learn, preserve, and expand the body of magical knowledge available to their people. Only 1-4 wang-liang mages may be found in a village, each mage being of level 1-20. The Elder Circle is the source of all magical items used by wang-liang.

Older males and older females who do not possess any talent for magic are free to engage in any pursuits that take their fancy: arts, history, music, gardening, social planning, or personal vengeance. These last become wanderers who enter the human scene, invisibly and alone, observing with contempt and cold hostility the rabble destined to extinguish their race. They carry with them the items made by the Elder Circle.

Most encounters with wang-liang will be with a lone traveler, one of these older individuals. This is an occasion for the Dungeon Master to exercise his ingenuity in devising a magical "trade" item. Remember that the wang-liang are intelligent and will have devised ways to ensure their own personal safety before starting any trouble. Unless the player characters are either very clever or very lucky, the wang-liang should get away.

A resourceful wang-liang may be the brains behind any number of unpleasant schemes. He may devote a few decades to the construction of a classic trap-laden dungeon baited with the usual rumors of danger and immense treasure. Or he may encourage a bandit gang, masterminding raids of ever-increasing audacity until the final, most daring job turns out to be a carefully prepared trap leading to a bloody battle and the capture and execution of the bandits. The wang-hang will be nowhere to be found; it was he who tipped off the authorities! He may supply a crime lord with generous supplies of a viciously addictive drug. He may induce

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author of *A la recherche du
temps perdu* a loony I shall
have to ask you to step
outside.

shape-changing goblin rats to act as front men to foment trouble and eventual war between two human political factions.

If a wang-liang is using evil humans as his tools to cause trouble for humanity, the joke is liable to be on them in the end. He holds nothing but contempt for any beings who are willing to turn upon their own kind, as witness the previous example of the bandits.

There is no recorded instance of a wang-liang bargaining in good faith with a human. If the wang-liang has some scrap of respect for the human, he will refuse to negotiate at all. Otherwise, he will spin a clever and elaborate deceit which does not bind him in the slightest. However, if a wang-liang *voluntarily* offers an actual promise, it can be relied upon absolutely, for then his honor is engaged and he will die sooner than break his pledged word.

Only in their remote forested mountain homelands will wang-liang ever be found in groups—a 5% chance at best. If adventurers encounter a pod (60% likely out of the multiple-being encounters), the wang-liang flee immediately using *invisibility*; if this is not possible, the adults will sacrifice their lives to ensure the escape of the children. Remember that wang-liang warriors will avenge any harm done to a pod, not only upon the offenders but also upon the nearest humans at hand, innocent or otherwise, in a ratio of 100 to one.

Young adult wang-liang in a village (40%

likely to be encountered) do not engage in offensive warfare but will defend themselves if attacked. Villages typically do not have much magic lying around. The call will go out, however, and any older wang-liang in the area will come to the assistance of a village under attack. If the threat is serious enough and there is time, any village can also call upon the Elder Circle to send help. This will be a spell-caster of power appropriate to the level of the threat, which gives the DM a chance to use spells of his own invention since wang-liang magic cannot be learned by anyone outside the Elder Circle.

An encounter with the full force of the Elder Circle should be avoided unless you are trying to end your campaign by slaughtering the entire party in a blaze of nonstandard magic. In that case, you're on your own.

This NPC race will not work as a player character race, for reasons evident in this article. It does provide the DM with an opportunity to challenge the players with a clever and unpredictable opponent. Ω

Table 1
Wang-Liang Hit Dice

1d100	Hit dice
01-60	6 + 3 HD
61-90	7 + 3 HD
91-00	8 + 3 HD

Table 2
Wang-Liang Invisibility

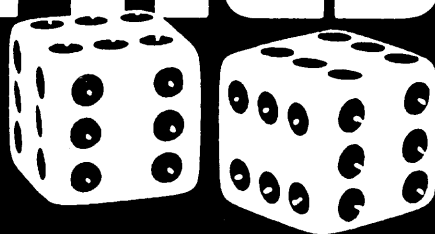
HD	Invisible to total levels or hit dice
6 + 3	21
7 + 3	28
8 + 3	36

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Illustration by Jim Holloway

The Ecology of the Yuan-ti

They're not merely poisonous—
they're venomous

by David Wellman

"It rose out of the muck before me, in the manner of a huge snake readying its strike. Six or seven feet long, it had the lower body and head of a serpent: green scales, wet and glittering in the dim sunlight; a muddied yellow belly; and red eyes that stared with malevolence. But what choked me with revulsion was the human torso and arms between the snake-head and tail. My courage wavered. Then I saw that wrapped tightly around the thing's waist was a belt from which hung the daisho—the katana and wakizashi—in mockery of the status of the samurai. The sight of such a disgrace ripped me from my trance. I drew my grandfather's katana from my hip with a shout. Not even devils themselves could have stopped me then, for I would not allow the rank of samurai to be worn by such as this. . . ."

—From the memoirs of the samurai Hirikito Toshubu, of the Imperial staff.

Hirikito's adversary was a halfbreed yuan-ti, one of three types of the yuan-ti race. Yuan-ti use magic, are magic resistant, and have genius-level intellects, and as such are dangerous foes for even the most well-organized party. The pureblood yuan-ti can easily blend itself into human society, making even large cities possible encounter areas for the yuan-ti.

Although they can be used in an Occidental campaign, yuan-ti fit better within the Oriental milieu. But much more information is needed on their motives and history before the race can be used to its full potential.

The origins of the yuan-ti date to the dawn of man. Ages ago, when mankind took its first tottering steps, there came among men a monstrous corruption known as Sch'theraqpasstt. This god is now a shadow of his former self, driven to both ultimate power and ultimate madness in an insane attempt to become one with the Abyssal plane he ruled.

Evil men, hungry for power and dominion over their kindred, turned to the worship of this dark force. The result, true to the tenets of chaos and evil, was more a curse than a blessing. These men were instructed to gain the venom of the ophi-

dian, a snakelike creature with human arms (see the *Monster Manual II*, page 97). The venom of these creatures transmutes victims into ophidians over a period of several weeks. The ophidian is believed by sages to be a creation of Sch'theraqpasstt, sent to wreak havoc on the Prime Material plane. When its venom is distilled and mixed with other ingredients known only to the yuan-ti, then consecrated to their deity, it becomes what is known to sages as the Black Broth.

The worshipers of Sch'theraqpasstt who first created the Black Broth were also its first imbibers and were willingly transformed into the histachii, progenitors of the yuan-ti race. Among the three types of yuan-ti—pureblood, halfbreed, and abomination—any mating produces only abominations. The pureblood yuan-ti is created in matings of histachii with other histachii, and the matings of histachii with any true yuan-ti produces a halfbreed. Thus, the yuan-ti need a constant supply of humans in order to sustain the race. Such has been the fate of many human captives of the yuan-ti, transformed into the mindless histachii.

The gestation period for yuan-ti young is about 60 months. Approximately 30% of the resulting creatures are so deformed that they die shortly after birth. This gives the yuan-ti a very low growth rate but is counterbalanced by their extremely long lifespans. Pureblood yuan-ti age as do gray elves (AD&D 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*, page 13). Halfbreeds live twice as long as purebloods, and abominations have a life span three times that of a gray elf, some 6,000 years.

When considering the lifespans and power of the yuan-ti, one might wonder why they do not control the world. In fact, they once held a great empire that spanned much of the southern jungles of Kara-Tur. In forgotten corners of the land, crumbling basalt temples stand in mute testament to their once far-reaching grasp. Then came the fall of Sch'theraqpasstt.

The god's schemes were his undoing, and he was reduced to the operational level of a major demon. His clerics (humans, as yuan-ti cannot be any class)



found themselves without spell abilities and thus unable to complete the consecration of the Black Broth. The yuan-ti empire was thrown into chaos. The forces of good took the chance to destroy the yuan-ti empire, which they did to such an extent that the race of yuan-ti was very nearly wiped from existence.

The few surviving yuan-ti dispersed, turning to other evil beings from the Abyss for aid. They gained little, as no other deity could successfully aid them in their quest to create the Black Broth. Eventually, they discovered the true fate of their god and therein the salvation of their race. At times when the stars and planets are in a specific alignment, signaling the conjunction of Sch'theraqpasstt's plane and the Prime Material plane, the yuan-ti may draw directly upon the energy of that plane and complete the Black Broth. Although this saved the yuan-ti from degenerating into a race of abominations, it did not mark their return to power. The conjunction of the planes needed to complete the Black Broth comes but once a millennium.

This is the current situation of the yuan-ti: small numbers, an erratic breeding cycle, and a 1,000-year wait between breeding periods for two-thirds of the race. Although abominations may still be created without difficulty, the yuan-ti limit their birth rate to avoid gaining the attention of the forces of good before they discover a more stable method of continuing their race. Population inequities result, of course; each yuan-ti encountered has a 70% chance of being an abomination, a 20% chance of being a halfbreed, and a 10% chance of being a pureblood (but only purebloods travel among men).

Yuan-ti temples are usually huge basalt edifices with no windows and only one entrance. The walls are carved with revolting scenes involving yuan-ti, humans, and unspeakable creatures from the outer planes. Even abandoned ruins are places of great evil and are almost always infested with foul monsters. Torture of helpless subjects is a favorite pastime of the yuan-ti, and implements of torture are easily found in their places of worship.

They will sometimes enslave humans, and such slaves will usually be crippled or maimed, thanks to the mercies of their captors. Yuan-ti do not forget their downfall at the hands of good forces, and any good-aligned character caught in their clutches are often tortured long and lavishly before death, unless they fall victim to the Black Broth.

Yuan-ti have no holy days or festivals except for the Night of Venom once every 1,000 years. This is the conjunction that allows the completion of the Black Broth. Beginning about a year before the Night, the yuan-ti become increasingly active. They create as much of the Broth as possible and raid human settlements to kidnap victims for the rite. Any single group of yuan-ti will create 20-200 histachii on the Night of Venom. The forces of good, however, have found these occasions excellent times to destroy large numbers of yuan-ti, and most of the ceremonies are broken up before they are completed. Still, it is rumored that in some evil-infested swamps these creatures thrive in small cities and aspire to regain their former dominance.

Yuan-ti build dwellings both above and below ground, and their temples are known for mazes of tunnels and dungeon chambers. Their lodgings usually consist of squat stone buildings (normally of volcanic rock), each with 2-5 rooms and an underground chamber. In yuan-ti communities, these underground chambers are connected to each other and to underground meeting places, throne rooms, treasuries, etc. Even a small yuan-ti village has an extensive underground layout.

Any yuan-ti community will be ruled by the strongest abomination in the community. This creature's basic duties are to settle disputes, oversee the protection of the community, and regulate the activities of that community's purebloods in the human world. Even though yuan-ti are chaotic evil, they are extremely intelligent. As they do not wish to further reduce their population, physical combat is rare among the yuan-ti. Instead, many disputes are settled by weaponless combat that can easily be stopped short of fatality.

When attacked, yuan-ti are capable of a high degree of organization, especially if a community is threatened. Those able to cast spells will use *sticks to snakes* and *darkness* to hold off attackers, *cause fear* to split a weakened group, then *suggestion* and *polymorph* other before engaging in melee. Magical weapons will most certainly be used if available. The yuan-ti will know the properties of any miscellaneous magical items they possess and will use them if possible.

Yuan-ti will often cooperate with other evil creatures as long as such cooperation will further their own ends. Ophidians are found 70% of the time in yuan-ti communities and are highly valued for their venom. Some yuan-ti have been known to use traps poisoned with ophidian venom.

Characters wounded by these must save vs. poison at +2 or be affected as if they have been bitten by ophidians. Yuan-ti have been known to work with nagas, kappas, bajang, and evil dragons, and they are rarely the losers in such partnerships.

In playing yuan-ti, the DM must remember that these are highly intelligent, powerful, evil creatures with a goal of world domination. They do not involve themselves in petty affairs, nor do they deal lightly with those who interfere with their plans. Yuan-ti do not forget such interference, even throughout their long lifespans. They treat revenge as they treat torture—it should be long, lavish, and painful.

Sch'theraqpasstt (Major demon)

FREQUENCY: *Unique*

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: -4

MOVE: 12"/36" (MC: C)

HIT DICE: 111 hp (attacks as 16 + HD monster)

% IN LAIR: Nil

TREASURE TYPE: Nil

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 bite and 2 constriction
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-12/3-30

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Poisonous bite, continuous damage, insanity aura*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: +2 or better weapon needed to hit, immune to mind-affecting spells, psionics, and illusions

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 50%

INTELLIGENCE: *Supragenius (insane; see below)*

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic evil*

SIZE: L (60' long)

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

Sch'theraqpasstt (pronounced schikthere-AUK-past) was once a lesser god that ruled the 111th plane of the Abyss, and from there orchestrated the creation of the yuan-ti ages ago. However, he was not satisfied with being "simply" a god, and he devised a method to gain ultimate power. Sch'theraqpasstt attempted to merge his life-essence with the plane he ruled and become, in effect, a living dimension.

His scheme destroyed him by giving him what he wanted. He succeeded in merging with his plane of the Abyss, but no intellect, no matter how powerful, could stand the strain of being joined with pure Chaos. All but a minute portion of his psyche went insane; with what little of his mind was left, he formed the body described herein, a shadow of his former self.

This manifestation appears as a 60'-long, winged, ebony serpent. The attack modes are bite and, constriction. Those bitten take 2-12 hp damage and must save versus poison at -4 or contract a form of insanity. Such insanity can be cured with a *heal* wish, limited wish or alter reality spell. Constriction causes 3-30 hp damage, and such damage is automatic every round after the first hit. Sch'theraqpasstt can constrict up to six small-size, four man-

size, or two large-size creatures per round.

A +2 or better weapon is needed to hit Sch'theraqpasstt, and in addition to his magic resistance, he is immune to all mind-affecting spells (including illusions). All beings within 100' of Sch'theraqpasstt must save at the beginning of every round or be affected as per a *scarab of insanity*.

Sch'theraqpasstt flits through the multiverse in a random fashion, rarely staying in one place for more than one turn. He has been seen on the Prime Material plane several times and will always be there on the Night of Venom, usually where the greatest number of yuan-ti are singing his praises. At this time he will be somewhat rational, but at other times there is a 10% chance per round that his intelligence will slip from supragenius to complete idiocy. If Sch'theraqpasstt goes insane during a battle, he fights to the death, with +2 on all to-hit, damage, and saving rolls, and a -2 penalty to his opponents' saves vs. his poison and magical effects.

If Sch'theraqpasstt's material form is killed, his psyche returns to his home plane of the Abyss and reforms over a period of 111 days. The only way to truly destroy this being is to destroy his entire plane. Thus, at the price of his godhood and sanity, Sch'theraqpasstt attained an indestructible immortality.

This being's home plane is known as "The Mind of Evil." The only activity there is the chaotic whirling of an intelligent, insane plane. Anyone transported here is at the mercy of Sch'theraqpasstt and, as magic does not work here, has almost no chance of survival. Note that all planar travelers are aware of this peril and avoid that layer of the Abyss at all costs.

Part of the yuan-ti plan after conquering the world is to gather all the magic they can find and use it to reverse the downfall of their god. Whether this can be achieved is unknown, but there are few persons outside yuan-ti society who wish to see this come about.

Histachii

FREQUENCY: *Very rare (found only every 1,000 years)*

NO. APPEARING: *See below*

ARMOR CLASS: 8

MOVE: 12"

HIT DICE: 2 + 2

% IN LAIR: 100%

TREASURE TYPE: *None*

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 claws and 1 bite

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-2/1-2/1-3

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Berserk attack for +2 to hit*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Immune to psionics and mind-affecting spells*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *Low (insane)*

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic evil*

SIZE: M

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

"The histachii inspired me with nothing less than revulsion. It had once been human, but now its skin was a mottled yellow, stretched taut over bone and muscle. Much of its hair had fallen out, and what was left was greasy and matted. The nails had become claws extending out from the fingertips and the teeth were sharply pointed. But the worst were the eyes, black pits of nothingness that spoke of the maelstrom of madness that whirled behind them. The thing drooled and gibbered, casting about in its chains for something to rend. . . ."

—From the library of Hodukuri the sage.

Histachii are the final product of the Black Broth, the baby factories for pure-blood and halfbreed yuan-ti. The transformation they undergo takes 7-12 days, is excruciatingly painful, and drives the formerly human imbibers insane. Histachii attack any nonreptilian being they encounter but will obey any yuan-ti within speaking range.

Histachii have a lifespan of 20-80 years after their creation, and their lives are devoted to breeding more yuan-ti. Some have posed the question of why the yuan-ti do not simply forget about purebloods and halfbreeds and rely solely on abominations, which can be produced without histachii. The answer lies in the goals of the yuan-ti as a race. The yuan-ti wish to control the world as they almost did ages ago. To allow degeneration of the race into nothing but abominations would hinder this goal. No longer would there be pure-bloods and halfbreeds to infiltrate human society and corrupt from within; they would only have brute force and mass warfare as their options. Considering the levels of power humans and other races may attain, they see no sure or easy victory in that path. They prefer to subtly sow the seeds of chaos, and once foundations are undermined, they strike.

Histachii are only encountered in the time immediately following the creation of Black Broth. Any human prisoners are subjected to the Black Broth's effects at that time; large groups of yuan-ti may have 20-200 prisoners, but small groups may have 2-20.

The Black Broth

Ingredients:

- venom of an ophidian
- The egg of an amphisbaena
- 12 drops of yuan-ti blood
- 12 drops of human blood
- Petals and seeds of a withered sunflower
- The eyes of 100 normal dragonflies
- Powdered bloodstone (not less than 250 gp worth)
- *Potion of human control*
- A quantity of peat and human hair

Procedure: First, a fire pit is dug and filled with peat. The human hair is wrapped about a stick, lit, and laid in the

peat. A *sticks to snakes* spell is cast to turn the stick into a snake, which writhes burning through the peat and sets it alight. Over this fire, the ophidian venom is distilled to a syrupy black liquid. Another container is lined with the sunflower petals and seeds, which are in turn coated with the contents of the amphisbaena egg. This coating is accomplished by a yuan-ti crushing the egg in its hands and lightly spreading it over the petals and seeds. The powdered gemstone is then added to this mixture, while the dragonfly eyes are added to the boiling venom. After the eyes have been mixed in, this substance is poured into the other container. As soon as this is accomplished, the blood is added, drop by drop, alternating types with each drop, and a *polymorph other* spell is cast upon the entire mixture. Finally, at the consecration, the priest imbibes the *potion of human control* and performs the blessing. The Black Broth is now complete.

In response to their desires for power, Sch'theraqqasst gave to his followers the formula to create the Black Broth. The result, much to the woe of the world, was the introduction of the race called yuan-ti to the world. In the beginning, it was intended that the Black Broth would create histachii, who would create pure-bloods, who in turn would create halfbreeds and finally the end product, abominations. But in light of their fall from power, halfbreeds and especially purebloods were deemed necessary in their schemes to regain domination. Pure-bloods could infiltrate the world of humans. Human-headed halfbreeds would become the priests, snake-headed halfbreeds the temple guards and warriors, and the abominations would be the rulers. With the aid of the Black Broth, the histachii became the foul reproductive arm of the race.

Any nonhuman who drinks the Black Broth must save vs. poison at -4 or die. Those who save will be violently ill and helpless for 1-4 turns. Any creature drinking an uncompleted version of the potion (i.e., before its consecration on the Night of Venom) must save vs. poison at normal

chances or suffer the same fate.


Any human drinking the completed Black Broth must make a save vs. poison at -4. If the save is successful, the drinker dies. If the save is failed, the victim will become a histachii in 7-12 days. (Anyone dying from the Black Broth can be saved normally with a *slow poison* or *neutralize* poison. Since spell-casting yuan-ti possess the *neutralize poison* spell, a human dying on the Night of Venom may find himself alive again, only to face another draught of the foul potion.)

Once a human begins the process of transformation, few methods may be used to save him. *Neutralize poison*, *dispel magic*, *remove curse*, and heal spells will reverse the process but must be cast consecutively and in that order. The victim will lose one point of intelligence; a *wish*, *limited wish*, or *after reality* will save the victim with no loss of intelligence. Once the transformation is complete, only a *wish* will restore the victim.


Adventurers have asked why the yuan-ti do not simply consecrate an ocean of the substance on the Night of Venom. The problem is that the Black Broth is unstable. Once created, it must be consecrated within a week or the effort is wasted. Even consecration does little to add to its stability; after two weeks, it simply becomes a poison equal to what it was before consecration.

A further question is why no other being's power can consecrate the formula and attain the same effect. The sage Hodukuri speculates that Sch'theraqqasst decreed that only his blessings would activate the formula. Although his power is now far reduced, it still exists and the godly declaration is still empowered. If that power were destroyed, continued Hodukuri, there are two possible outcomes: The formula might be freed for any to empower, or it may be rendered useless for all eternity. Ω

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The Beastie Knows Best

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It's time for the second annual Beastie Award for the best computer entertainment product. The calibre of computer and video system gaming continues to rise. Better graphics, sound, and user interfaces and new and unusual ideas have moved gaming into a higher plane of popularity. Lower prices of PC/MS-DOS computers and the introduction of color for the Macintosh II now place both of these systems in the upper range of gaming environments with the Commodore Amiga and the Atari ST.

We would like to thank you, the readers, for your hundreds of letters of the past months. Your votes have been tallied, and the results are given herein. Each reader was allowed only one vote, and the Beastie Award is presented to the software game that received the highest number of votes. The game must also be offered in more than one computer system format to be eligible for this award. Award recognition of other programs is determined by the software columnists. The awards herein are presented to games received between December 1988 and August 1989.

The Beastie Award



Pool of Radiance (SSI)

Pool of Radiance is the most popular fantasy role-playing game of the year. The voting for it was heavily Apple II in nature; the PC/MS-DOS format came in a close second in total number of votes, with the Commodore 64/128 version garnering the fewest votes for that game. *Pool of Radiance* seemed to attract votes due to a

variety of factors, the primary being the game's faithfulness to the AD&D® game system. Great graphics and an easy-to-use user-interface to activate commands also added to the game's value. With the majority of DRAGON® Magazine's readers being so familiar with FRPGs, it's no wonder *Pool of Radiance* fared so well. The game certainly deserves this recognition, especially due to the teamwork between Strategic Simulations and TSR, Inc.

The Beastie runner-up



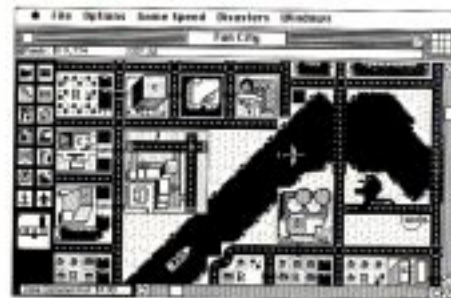
Ultima V (Origin)

Ultima V was the runner-up for the most popular FRPG of the year, with approximately three-quarters the number of ballots that *Pool of Radiance* received. The majority of gamers voted for the Apple IIGS version, followed by the PC/MS-DOS, Commodore Amiga, and C64/128 versions, in that order. *Ultima V* is proof positive that sequels can be successful. It combines the best of interactive role-playing with sophisticated quests to produce an FRPG offering great enjoyment for your gaming dollar. (*Ultima V* won our specific-system award for the Apple II last year.)

Specific category awards

Best War Game

Decisive Battles of the American Civil War; Volume Two: Gaines Mill to Chancellorsville (Strategic Studies Group; Volume One was one of last year's best military strategy games.)



Best Simulation Game

SimCity (Maxis Software, Inc.)

Best Arcade Game

Tetris (Spectrum HoloByte)

Best Driving Simulation

Test Drive II and accessory disks (Accolade, Inc.; *Test Drive I* was one of the best in this category last year, too.)

Best Flight Simulator

Falcon (Spectrum HoloByte)

Best Sports Simulation

Wayne Gretzky Hockey (Bethesda Softworks)

Best Historical Simulation

Gold Rush (Sierra On-Line)

Best Game Conversion

The Bard's Tale I to the Apple Macintosh (Interplay Productions)

Best VCR Game

VCR California Games (Epyx, Inc.)

Best Video Game

Space Harrier 3-D (SEGA)

Best Input/Output Device

PowerPlayers Joystick (Mindscape, Inc.)

Specific system awards

Fantasy role-playing games

Apple II: *Times of Lore* (Origin)



Apple IIGS *Dungeon Master* (FTL Games; this game wins this category award for the second year running!)

PC/MS-DOS: *Might and Magic II* (New World Computing, Inc.; *Might and Magic I* was last year's Beastie Award winner.)



Apple Macintosh: *Journey* (Infocom/Mediagenic)

Commodore 64/128: *The Legend of Black-silver* (Epyx, Inc.)

Commodore Amiga: *Dungeon Master* (FTL Games)

Action-adventure games

Atari ST: *Rocket Ranger* (Cinemaware)

Commodore Amiga: *Hostage* (Mindscape, Inc.)

Science-fiction games

Commodore Amiga: *Breach* (Omnitrend Software)



PC/MS-DOS: *Sentinel Worlds* (Electronic Arts)

Combat/war-game simulations

Apple II: *The Ancient Art of War at Sea* (Broderbund Software; the IBM micros/compatibles version was one of last year's best military strategy games.)

Commodore Amiga: *Rebel Charge at Chickamauga* (SSI)



PC/MS-DOS: *Battlehawks* (Lucasfilm Games)

Sports simulations

Apple II: *John Madden Football* (Electronic Arts)

Apple IIGs: *Zany Golf* (Electronic Arts)

Apple Macintosh: *Jack Nicklaus's Greatest 18 Holes of Championship Golf* (Accolade, Inc.)

Atari ST: *TV Sports Football* (Cinemaware)
Commodore Amiga: *Jack Nicklaus's Greatest 18 Holes of Championship Golf* (Accolade, Inc.)

PC/MS-DOS: *Earl Weaver Baseball*, with 1988 player stats & commissioner's disk (Electronic Arts)

Most Innovative Games

Apple Macintosh (CD-ROM version): *The Manhole* (Activision/Mediagenic)

PC/MS-DOS: *Captain Blood* (Mindscape, Inc.)

Most Unusual Games

Macintosh: *MacScuba Dive Simulator* (Paradise Software Corporation)



PC/MS-DOS: *Life and Death* (The Software Toolworks)

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Role-playing Reviews



Further adventures in fantasy

©1989 by Jim Bambra

Adventures are the meat and drink of any fantasy system, whether they are our own creations or the work of professional designers. Although we admire detailed, innovative settings and background material, the excitement and fun of player and GM interaction are the main reasons we play role-playing games. Performing heroic deeds and puzzling out complex mysteries give life to our games. These activities engage our imaginations and interest, transporting us to exotic worlds where the actions of our characters can make an impression on events.

There are certain elements that make an adventure good, such as intricacies of plot, clever NPCs, or climactic battles. But these virtues are relatively worthless if we have to wade through cluttered or badly presented text before we can use them. To aspire to excellence, adventures need to be well written and thoughtfully presented. Adventures that lack adequate maps, are short on directions to the GM, or are blandly written turn me right off. Descriptions along the lines of: "This room contains four orcs armed with swords; they have three silver pieces each" are boring. I'd like to know what the orcs are doing

there, how they are going to react to intruders, how they are going to fight, and what information they can reveal to the adventurers. Details such as these make an adventure more vibrant and alive, and raise even the most basic monster-stomping, treasure-grabbing adventure to something special. The four adventures reviewed here all have plenty to offer.

Something Rotten in Kislev

Campaign setting and adventure for
WARHAMMER™ FANTASY ROLEPLAY
144-page hardback book
Games Workshop Ltd. \$22.95
Design: Ken Rolston
Editing and development: Graeme Davis
Cover illustration: Richard Dolan
Interior illustrations: Martin McKenna, "H,"
Paul Bonner, Maz Sheperd, Tim Pollard
Cartography: Ian Cooke

Something Rotten in Kislev is a real treat, in both visual presentation and quality of adventure material. It is a product rich in graphics and GM aids. The many illustrations enhance the flavor of the text, and it comes with superbly ren-

dered maps and player handouts.

Something Rotten contains three adventures that can be linked into an extended campaign or used as isolated adventures. It is set in Kislev, the equivalent of medieval Russia in the WARHAMMER world. Essays describe the history of Kislev and its lands and peoples in an engaging and useful manner, setting the scene for the adventures that follow.

The adventures are rich in color and staging tips. Dialogue is used to good effect to handle character interaction with NPCs by depicting their speech patterns and mannerisms. In these pages, we see how the people of this cold, inhospitable land, who are threatened by the Forces of Chaos to the north, view the world around them. This description is not restricted to human and demihuman NPCs; we are also treated to insights into the thought patterns of hobgoblin raiders.

Undead have always held a deep fascination for me. Whether they are lowly skeletons or powerful liches, undead make ideal opponents. They ooze evil and decay, horror and revulsion. You know where you stand with undead—or at least that's what I thought until *Something Rotten in*

Kislev came along. Here, we have undead who serve a useful purpose in holding back the Forces of Chaos. Necromancers, who are normally vile and despicable characters, are shown to be real people, too. What they do may not be very nice, but it serves a far greater goal than the creation of skeletons and zombies.

As can be guessed, *Something Rotten in Kislev* is geared toward interactive role-playing and problem solving. It contains its fair share of combat, but the interaction with NPCs makes it really special. While suitably dark and dismal, it also has its humorous moments as the adventurers deal with dangerous nature spirits, proud but superstitious nomads, petty nobles, and a necromancer with a social conscience. Player characters also discover copious amounts of information on the characteristics of the undead and how to deal with them. Some of this is completely bogus, but sorting the hard facts from the rumors and misinformation is all part of the fun.

To round off the package, there are six detailed characters suitable for the adventure. They can be used in their present form or as models for the best type of party to participate in the adventures. Personally, I'd use them as they are; their backgrounds and characterizations are too good to ignore.

Evaluation: *Something Rotten in Kislev* is one of the best adventures that I've seen in a long time. It scores high in every department, and the graphics are superb. Even if you have no interest in WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY, check this one out; you won't be disappointed. Many of its elements can be easily used in other role-playing games. In short, it's a classic. This is available in the U.S. from Games Workshop Ltd., 3431 Benson Avenue, Baltimore MD 21227; in the U.K. from Games Workshop Ltd., Chewton Street, Hilltop, Eastwood, Nottingham, England NG16 3HY.

Tournament of Dreams

Adventures for the PENDRAGON game
48-page softbound book
Chaosium Inc. \$7.95
Design: Les Brooks, Sam Shirley, and Greg Stafford
Editing: William G. Dunn
Cover illustration: Steve Purcell
Interior illustrations: Susan Seddon Boulet
Cartography: Caroline Schultz

The PENDRAGON game is rich in narrative virtues and chivalric role-playing, and adventures for it have been consistently good although few in number. *Tournament of Dreams* had the distinction of being voted the best role-playing adventure of 1987 in GAMA's ORIGINS™ Awards, which it deserved. It makes good use of the Arthurian setting to create two memorable adventures containing plenty of texture and depth. Full of staging directions and tips for the GM on how to make the best use of the material, it stands head and

shoulders above most other role-playing adventures.

The quality of the graphic presentation is high, with sidebars used to good effect to convey game mechanics in a clear and uncluttered fashion. The writing draws the reader into the adventure and makes it a pleasure to run.

The treatment of magical effects in "The Tournament of Dreams" adventure (by Les Brooks and Sam Shirley) is superb and admirably conveys the dreamlike quality of the pagan otherworld. In this first adventure, chivalric knights have their knightly virtues tested to the extreme and discover that the PENDRAGON game's character trait system is more than just a handy method of defining a character's personality. Arriving at a tournament in the pagan land of Sugales, the knights are drawn into a struggle for power in which their own base drives may well get the better of them. Enticed and enchanted by pagan magic, knights may end up with far more than they bargained for. Only the strength of their Christian beliefs may still save them.

The second adventure, "The Circle of Gold" (by Gregg Stafford) is more straightforward in style. It pits the knights against the chivalrous defenders of the Land of the Circle of Gold as the knights attempt to win their way through to the Circle of Gold. Along the way, they must defeat in single combat the knights arrayed against them. This adventure highlights the chivalric background of Arthurian romances, with enough encounters with magical beings to keep the knights on their toes.

Evaluation: *Tournament of Dreams* exploits the PENDRAGON game's rich Arthurian background to test a knight's valor, combat abilities, and virtues with moral dilemmas and dangerous opponents. High in suspense and narrative values, it deserves to be in every gamer's collection. *Tournament of Dreams* is available from Chaosium Inc., P.O. Box 6302, Albany CA 94706.

Harkwood

Campaign setting and adventure for the GURPS® game
64-page softbound book
Steve Jackson Games, Inc. \$8.95
Design: Aaron Allston and J. David George
Editing: J. David George and Monica Stephens
Cover illustration: Darla Tagrin
Interior illustrations: Guy Burchak
Cartography: Carl Manz, Czeslaw Sornat, and C. Mara Lee

Currently one of only two adventures available for the GURPS® Fantasy game, *Harkwood*, like *Tournament of Dreams*, takes place during a tournament run by a local baron. Whereas *Tournament of Dreams* injects rich magical effects into the chivalric world of Arthurian fantasy, *Harkwood* is notable for paying only passing lip service to the detailed GURPS Magic

system. The setting for *Harkwood* is the low-mana land of Caithness, where magic is *much* harder to use than elsewhere in the world of Yrth, a situation that makes wizards a 'rarity in Caithness.

The GURPS Fantasy supplement is now out of print; the magic section has been replaced by the GURPS Magic game (see "Role-playing Reviews" in DRAGON® issue #147) and the world background will be expanded in the forthcoming GURPS Yrth sourcebook. *Harkwood*, however, is also a sourcebook for the land of Caithness and can be played without the rest of the Yrth background. The barony of Harkwood is described and its major personages fully detailed, making *Harkwood* useful when the adventure is completed.

Although players can take on the roles of wizards, *Harkwood* is really a showcase for the sophisticated and highly playable GURPS combat system, making it suitable for fighters of noble, or not-so-noble status. The tournament is clearly described and lets players gain familiarity with the combat system and hone their character's combat skills with little risk to life or limb. But *Harkwood* is much more than just a run of the mill medieval tournament; intrigue abounds and the future of the barony is at stake.

As a novelty, *Harkwood* allows the GM to choose one of six characters to be responsible for the nefarious occurrences in the barony. This is both a strength and a weakness. I found the rationales for the motivations of some of the bad guys unconvincing, and found that the clues pointing to their involvement sat awkwardly with the rest of the adventure. Having said that, letting the GM choose the bad guy does serve to directly involve the GM in the design of the adventure.

The presentation is of a high standard; the sidebars provide background information and tips for the GM on how to stage and direct the adventure. Space is also devoted to discussing what could go wrong with the adventure and offering solid advice for the GM on how to handle these problems. Maps are provided for all the major encounter areas, making *Harkwood* a complete package.

Along with the tournament events, there's plenty to keep the characters alert and to leave them guessing as to what is really taking place. The large amount of information provided allows players to interact with NPCs outside of the main flow of the adventure and for GMs to easily develop their own subplots and minor encounters.

Evaluation: *Harkwood* is a good adventure. Strong in medieval flavor, it is ideal for players who like a low magic background to their adventures. Plus, it makes an ideal starting point for any GURPS Fantasy or medieval campaign. While lacking a strong fantasy flavor, *Harkwood* is well structured and presented, and I recommend it highly. GMs of other systems looking for ways to include

tournaments in their adventures will find it an invaluable aid. *Harkwood* is available from Steve Jackson Games, Box 18957, Austin TX 78760.

Lords of Darkness

Supplement and adventures for the AD&D® game

96-page perfect-bound book
TSR, Inc.

\$8.95

Design: Ed Greenwood, Deborah Christian, Michael Stackpole, Paul Jaquays, Steve Perrin, Vince Garcia, and Jean Rabe

Editing: Scott Martin Bowles

Cover illustration: Jeff Easley

Interior illustrations: Karl Waller

Cartography: Dave LaForce

Lords of Darkness is an anthology that includes adventures and background information dealing with most of the undead monsters commonly encountered in the AD&D game. Although sold as a FORGOTTEN REALMS™ setting accessory, it is useable with any AD&D campaign.

Before taking a detailed look at its contents, let's take a quick look at what *Lords of Darkness* sets out to achieve. The intention is to provide short adventures that can be easily inserted into a campaign any time a GM wants the players to encounter undead. Each of the undead featured in the adventures has background information provided in the form of a short, fictional piece describing the undead in action or else delivered in a monologue by a person knowledgeable about the undead. Many insights are provided into the creation and drives of the various undead monsters. This style of presentation is far superior to the dry style adopted by many supplement writers. Game rules follow, adding additional information and clarifying existing game mechanics.

The book begins by discussing ways in which the more powerful undead creatures' energy-draining attacks can be made less devastating to a PC's hard-earned experience levels. There are many suggestions and options here that give GMs alternatives to energy-draining attacks.

Designed to be easily dropped into an ongoing campaign, the adventures are mainly dungeon crawls of one form or another. Four of the adventures lack maps, which reduces their usefulness as simple plug-in scenarios. Two adventures are set in castles that cry out for at least schematic diagrams to show their layouts.

The quality of the adventures also varies greatly. Most are fairly good, but a few are so thin and underdeveloped that I wondered why they were included. The adventure dealing with zombies is the worst of the lot. Set in a castle, it puts 1st-level characters up against large numbers of 4th-level opponents who are likely to stomp them into the ground. To be fair, I suspect the suggested levels for this adventure are wrong, as 2nd-level or higher characters are needed to give the heroes a

chance of survival. This adventure also contains a magical sword, but no statistics are provided for it. Instructions on running the adventure are also far from clear. The adventure featuring shadows is little more than a single combat against a bunch of shadows. It's not very inspiring.

Fortunately, the other adventures display more imagination, and there are nice touches showing how to stage undead and use their abilities to good effect. The mummies' tomb and the lich's lair are fine examples of the dungeon designer's art.

Of note are the new, optional Horror Check rules. Horror Checks are made against characters' wisdom scores when they realize just how horrible a monster really is. Using these rules, characters cannot afford to treat undead as just another monster type, since long-term effects can result from failed checks. However, the system isn't integrated into the AD&D rules in a satisfactory manner, as characters will deteriorate to the stage where they are unable to function effectively—a situation contrary to the spirit of the game and more in keeping with the grim tone of Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU® game. Also, no tips are given on how characters may counter these effects by magical means. It's a laudable attempt to instill fear of the undead but not sufficiently developed to be effective.

Of more use is the section that discusses the effects that items and substances such as cold iron, garlic, salt, and mirrors have against undead. Creative GMs will be able to use these to add extra depth to their own undead adventures.

Then there are the new spells for magic-users who choose to specialize in the necromantic art. These add to a necromancer's repertoire, making him more distinctive and setting him apart from the standard mage.

Evaluation: *Lords of Darkness* expands greatly on the background of undead in the AD&D game and provides a source of short adventure settings. If you're looking for new necromantic spells, information on the ecologies of the undead, new ways to deal with them, plus a source of adventures, then *Lords of Darkness* is a worthwhile purchase. But its lack of maps and the underdevelopment of some of its adventures make it a merely useful rather than essential item.

Short and sweet

GAZ 9 *The Minrothad Guilds*, by Deborah Christian and Kim Eastland, and GAZ 11 *The Republic of Darokin*, by Scott Haring. TSR, Inc., \$9.95 each. Trade has played a large part in many science-fiction games, but rarely has it been more than an incidental event in fantasy games. Now, these two D&D® game Gazetteers bring trading adventures into the forefront of fantasy gaming. The Minrothad Guilds are seaborne merchants, and Darokin specializes in land-based guilds. Both Gazetteers cover life, society, and politics in their respective lands. With

rules regarding sea and land trading, fame and fortune can now be gained in ways other than mere adventuring.

GURPS Update, by Steve Jackson & David Ladyman. Steve Jackson Games, \$5.95. In line with its policy of providing solid support for its customers, Steve Jackson Games has produced the GURPS Update. This 80-page book provides all the rules needed to convert the 2nd edition GURPS Basic Set to the 3rd edition. It also covers the changes made in the ranged weapon rules for the GURPS Space, Humanx, Horror, and Japan supplements, letting GMs use these books with the 3rd edition rules. It's useful if you have the 2nd edition Basic Set and want to upgrade to the 3rd edition with a minimum of expense, but it is much more limited in use if you already own the 3rd edition. Available from Steve Jackson Games, Box 18957, Austin TX 78760.

Lords of Middle-earth, volumes I and II, by Peter Fenlon, Terry Amthor, and Mark Colborn. Iron Crown Enterprises, \$12.00 each; and *Creatures of Middle-earth*, by Ruth Sochard Pitt, Jeff O'Hare, and Peter Fenlon. Iron Crown Enterprises, \$10.00. Okay, Tolkien fans, these are for you! Full of background information on the elves, mannish races, and creatures of Middle-earth, they are handy sources of ideas for I.C.E.'s MERP™ game, other fantasy games, and lovers of Tolkien's creation.

ASSAULT ON HOTH game, by Paul Murphy. West End Games, \$25.00. On the ice world of Hoth, Imperial Walkers are advancing toward the shield generator which protects Echo Base from planetary bombardment. Within the base, ground crews desperately struggle to get the Rebels' transports away before the Imperials reach the generator. In the ASSAULT ON HOTH game, two players battle it out with Walkers, AT-ATs, snow speeders, infantry, and laser towers.

This is an exciting board game that uses an innovative move and action sequence to recreate the battle featured in the opening scenes of *The Empire Strikes Back*. The game moves at a fast pace and is easy to learn and play; all game rules are printed on the map sheets and on the Action Cards that determine whose turn it is to move or fire. Each game turn comprises a play through the Action Deck during which two event cards are played. These include reinforcements for one side or the other, special cards adding to fire power, and the all-important Transport Away cards. To win, the Rebel player needs to get five transports away before the Imperial player destroys the Shield Generator.

Add a few other neat touches such as Luke Skywalker's Force powers, harpoons, and high-quality components, and this game adds up to a very impressive set of rules. The ASSAULT ON HOTH game is

Continued on page 74

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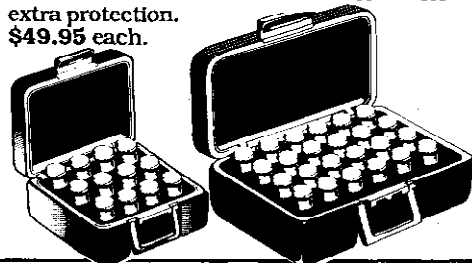
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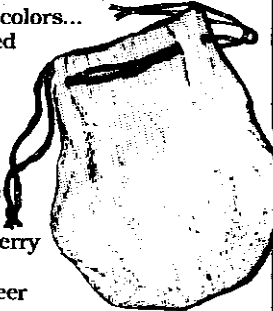


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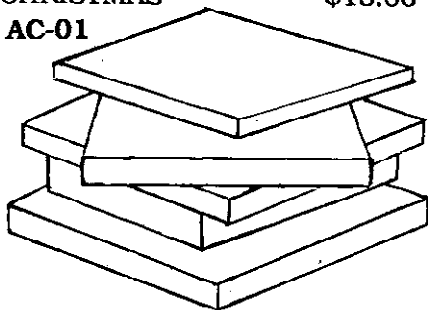


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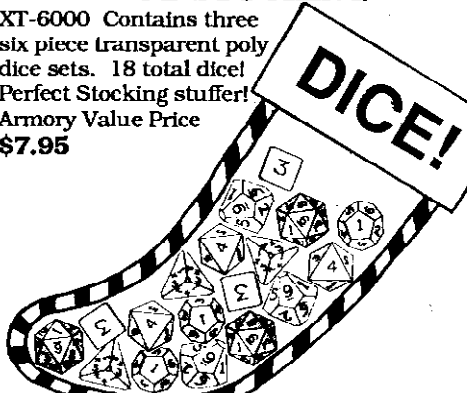


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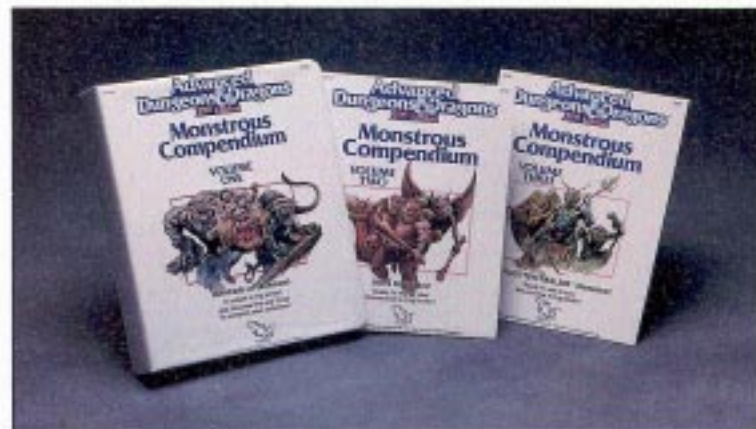
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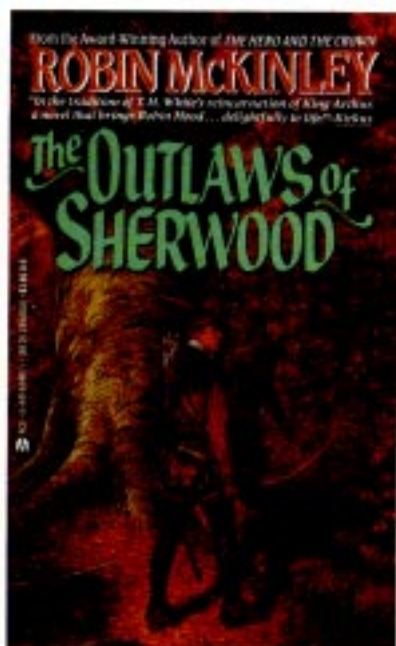
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The Role of Books

Winners, almost-winners, and close calls

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THE OUTLAWS OF SHERWOOD

Robin McKinley

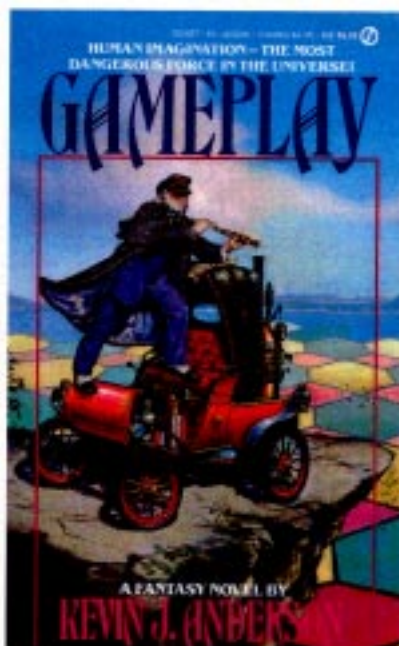
Ace 0-441-64451-1 \$3.95

"My Robin Hood," says Robin McKinley at the end of *The Outlaws of Sherwood*, "is meant to be neither absolute nor definitive—nor historically satisfying." Yet for all that, McKinley's retelling of Sherwood Forest's familiar history is wise and deeply satisfying, enough so that it is hard to imagine a version of the legend that could be discernibly better.

As noted back in DRAGON® issue #133, in connection with a less successful Robin Hood adaptation, would-be retellers of the stories must distinguish their own versions from the others not by taking their plots in new directions but by bringing unique insights and perspectives to the outlaw's already well-known adventures. It's a complex challenge, but McKinley meets it admirably; her novel demonstrates a remarkably clear understanding of the elements that make Robin Hood subtly different from most of today's other legendary heroes.

That distinction is a matter of cleverness and humanity. Robin Hood has never

bested the sheriff of Nottingham through brute force or military prowess. Rather, he succeeds at his craft by means of wit and guile, and the flair with which he relieves nobles of their gold is often as important as the gold itself. McKinley properly accents these ideas by focusing firmly on the immediate, human concerns of Robin and the men and women in his circle of



friends. That doesn't mean, though, that her novel is heavy with introspection; there's also a healthy swirl of observant humor as Robin and company learn to survive in Sherwood Forest and develop reputations that quickly threaten to surpass the reality. One amusing (if revisionist) point deserves note: In McKinley's yarn, Maid Marian—not Robin himself—is the outlaw band's premier archer!

The Outlaws of Sherwood may not claim to be definitive. But it's an extremely readable, engaging account of Robin Hood's adventures that turns the mythic outlaw into someone readers can easily reach into and empathize with. Gamers may wish to view it as an exercise in role-playing on

McKinley's part; while that's arguably true of all fiction, it's more easily perceived in this case and serves as yet another illustration of McKinley's sure craftsmanship.

CATASTROPHE'S SPELL

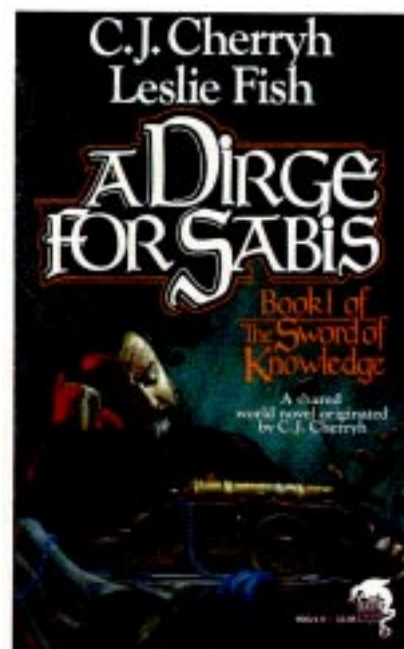
Mayer Alan Brenner

DAW 0-88677-357-1 \$3.95

It's fashionable to complain about the "blurb" copy on the backs of paperback novels and the dust jackets of hardcovers, and there are always those who claim (justly or otherwise) that the blurb writers don't read the books they're hired to summarize. *Catastrophe's Spell* puts a new wrinkle on the problem. The blurb writer's description of the tale is entirely too well-written; it's hard to see how reading the novel could leave such a clear and cogent impression.

All the ingredients look terribly promising. The apparent protagonist is Maximilian the Vaguely Disreputable, whose name and profession (traveling sorcerer and bailer-out of friends in distress) suggest debonair if stylishly inept swashbuckling. There's the nameless hardboiled detective hired to negotiate a ransom with the excessively mysterious Creeping Sword. And there's Zelzyn Shaa, who dislikes getting involved in political-magical infighting but is very good at impromptu rescues anyway. Add to the equation a power-hungry death god or two and a bit of theatrical speculation on the quantum mechanics of magic, and you have the potential for a furiously high-powered caper yarn.

Author Mayer Alan Brenner doesn't quite pull it off, though not for lack of trying. The problem is that *Catastrophe's Spell* reads like the third or fourth adventure in a series, yet there's no indication of any prior adventures anywhere, whether in magazine short stories or earlier novels. It's a technique that works for Sherlock Holmes tales (to pick an example) because



readers know who Holmes is ahead of time. For Max, Shaa, and Brenner's nameless investigator, it leaves readers frustrated, wondering what they've missed and whether they're missing some of the best jokes.

In effect, Brenner has simply tried to tell too much story in one book. By themselves, each of the three lead adventurers is appealing. There are some authentically spectacular special-effects scenes, and the magical theory has an air of appealing pseudo-authenticity. But in the space available, Brenner doesn't have enough time to develop any single element to memorable heights, and so the book leaves the impression of six or seven incomplete projects stacked erratically atop one another.

Catastrophe's Spell is likely to be popular, for much the same reasons that AD&D® game modules like the round-robin *Greyhawk Castle* are popular—the “chaotic whimsy” genre seems to be in vogue. That's too bad, because it may encourage Brenner to keep writing chaotic whimsy instead of refining and focusing his skills on more tightly conceived and constructed stories. The potential is there, and failing to make use of it would be a regrettable waste of ability.

THE SCHOLARS OF NIGHT

John M. Ford

Tor 0-812-50214-0 \$4.95

A great deal of John Ford's fiction—his *Star Trek* novels, his contributions to the Liavek shared-world series, and the feature story in the recent collection *Casting Fortune*—revolves around drama and the theater. *The Scholars of Night* takes this fascination with stagecraft into the nebulous realm between espionage and academia, and it emerges with a convoluted tale of shifting loyalties and many-layered manipulation. The blend of Elizabethan and modern spy puzzles occasionally becomes difficult to untangle, but this is one of those books that remains fascinating even if you get lost once or twice on the way through.

In addition to the theater lore, which focuses on a manuscript that may or may not have been written by Shakespearean contemporary Christopher Marlowe, Ford works in a gaming motif. History professor Nicholas Hansard orchestrates a mean KINGMAKER game (“Are we still on the subject of a cold beer?” “It's up to Paul and Parliament.”), and the internationally prominent members of a regular DIPLOMACY game group may also be involved in real-life spy intrigues.

The combinations and permutations just keep multiplying. *The Scholars of Night* is two very different kinds of spy novel at once. On one hand, a full range of high-tech weapons and deadly assassins put the book squarely in the realm of James Bond (and TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game) thrillers; On the other, Ford's distant yet intimate prose pulls readers under the skins of his characters, giving the book the sort of vast

“literary” flavor usually associated with John LeCarré and Len Deighton.

Two factors emerge as the novel's chief limitations. First, the use of the Marlowe play as the key to a series of vital passwords violates the rules of real-world spycraft (“Never name anything after something to which the first item has a discernible connection.”). Ford also never quite answers the question posed to scholar-protagonist Hansard: Are the play and its modern parallels authentic, or is the manuscript an elaborate forgery, possibly written purely to enhance the espionage operation in which it figures?

The other “problem” is that *The Scholars of Night* is far too effortlessly written to appreciate easily. The plot and pace move quickly enough that you may be halfway through the book before you realize that you're reading much too fast to understand all the convolutions and literary references. Of course, that's a difficulty hardly worth complaining about. John Ford demonstrates with this tale that some kinds of writing ability transcend genre boundaries, and that his is one of them.

SHADOW GAMES

Glen Cook

Tor 0-812-53382-8 \$3.95

This is less a review of *Shadow Games* than a series of observations about the novel and its author. If that sounds complicated and wishy-washy, so be it.

One: Glen Cook's novels are popular. I haven't kept a formal tally over the years, but a lot of people have mentioned Cook's work to me as good material either to read or review. That's particularly true of his Black Company cycle, of which *Shadow Games* is a part. And Cook attracts respectable attention from reviewers, too; even those who dislike individual books tend to sound apologetic in their criticisms.

Two: Cook is very good at evoking atmosphere. This latest Black Company novel is definitely a case in point. The lands through which the legendary mercenary troop travels are keenly portrayed, as is the Company's ever-restless collective personality. It's said that professional soldiers never really feel at home anywhere, and in this respect Cook's characters are true-to-life. (On the other hand, the tribesmen and city-dwellers the Company encounters on its travels often seem just as tense.) Cook is versatile, too. The tone of the Black Company tales is quite different from that of his Garrett books, about a hard-boiled human detective in a highly multiracial fantasy setting.

Three: Cook's presentation of military tactics feels skillful. Under the reluctant leadership of Croaker, the Black Company must face and survive a variety of authentic battle problems: how to overcome a substantially larger force, how to survive (and gather intelligence) in unfamiliar societies without getting lynched, and so on. All these are handled with a skillful combination of cynicism and logic, as well

as plausible attention to details.

Four: Notwithstanding the above, I don't find *Shadow Games* pleasant reading. I'm being blunt here: I find Cook's approach to military fantasy disquieting at best—a portrait of a world in which violence and chaos exist largely for their own sakes, with no end in sight and evil powers that reincarnate as casually as most people change their socks. For me, reading about the Black Company is a bit like flying to Beirut for a peaceful vacation.

But that's a subjective reaction, and Cook's writing is technically good enough that he doesn't deserve a bad review simply because I don't like the book. I expect that quite a few gamers, especially those who go in for large-scale battles and miniatures gaming, will find Cook and the Black Company far more to their taste than I do.

A DIRGE FOR SABIS

C. J. Cherryh and Leslie Fish

Baen 0-671-69824-9 \$3.95

One of the greatest debates in fantasy gaming has always been whether gunpowder and firearms can coexist with magic without fatally unbalancing the campaign in question. *A Dirge for Sabis* explores much the same issue and emerges, not surprisingly, with mixed results. Cherryh and Fish weave a skillful narrative around intriguing characters, but in the larger context, the world they create suffers from a kind of logical schizophrenia.

The story concerns a small cadre of metalsmith-engineers whose adopted city is about to be overrun by an invading horde. They're on the verge of perfecting the cannon but lack the patronage and funding to put it into production quickly enough to do any good. Instead, they flee northward, behind the enemy lines, setting up shop near a quiet village and slowly rebuilding their lives and crafts. New adversaries appear when the existing local “chapel” launches a subtle campaign of rumor and curse-magic designed to drive the newcomers away.

These engineers are apparently several centuries ahead of their time. The culture they settle in is essentially feudal, emphasizing barter over coin, and most of its populace looks on the engineers' activities as wizardry. Magic, meanwhile, is commonplace—urban households keep wizards on staff, important objects and persons are frequently warded against evil intent, and there is mention of faraway academies where magecraft is taught.

Magic is also, however, curiously limited. “There was only ill-wishing and well-wishing, nothing else,” says the book in a crucial trial scene. The novel conceives magic as power exclusively of the mind, yet explicitly disallows such things as precognition, telekinesis, or emotion-reading, while giving its wizards remarkably clear insight into the structures and patterns of mental energy. Another anomaly: Given this narrow view of magic, why are only the wizards versed in herb lore

and healing? The premise of Cherryh's and Fish's world is specialization, but in practice their characters' knowledge is notable for its breadth.

The underlying paradoxes seriously blunt the real thrust of *A Dirge for Sabis*: the idea that knowledge itself is a form of power, and that small bits of insight can have large consequences. There are too many elements in the tale for the authors to keep it tightly focused. That's not bad for those who simply want an absorbing afternoon's reading, and it's an apt illustration of the problems involved in balancing too many kinds of power in any setting. But as the first volume in a series titled *The Sword of Knowledge*, it's thematically weaker than it should be.

SWORDSPPOINT

Ellen Kushner

Tor 0-812-54348-3 \$3.95

The usual labels just barely begin to describe *Swordspoint*. It is arguably a swashbuckler, full of skilled swordsmen, richly garbed nobility, and dastardly intrigues. It's undoubtedly a romance, though decidedly unconventional. And it's definitely a period piece, shot through with the conventions and patterns of a generation of stylish theatrical drama (though not melodrama, as the book's subtitle suggests). But while Ellen Kushner's novel is all of these, it conforms to few of the preconceived notions conjured up by those adjectives.

The best word to describe the difference is *density*. The usual swashbuckling adventure or Renaissance romance has an effortless, light texture—one roads or watches the story flow by with smooth ease. You don't have to work hard to discern what's going on; it's all played out in instantly accessible surface detail. *Swordspoint* is another matter. Kushner's prose is somehow far more intense, conveying atmosphere, emotion, and texture on several levels at once. And the additional content is packed so tightly into the text that it can't be ignored or passed over. Kushner doesn't use more words, nor does she arrange them in discernibly different patterns. She simply knows exactly the right language to paint the richly detailed portrait she wishes.

That portrait is a picture of Richard St Vier, a professional swordsman in a realm where professional swordsmen are valued both for their extraordinary artistry and their willingness to serve as surrogate duelists and assassins. St Vier is possibly the best swordsman the city has ever seen, but as Kushner's novel opens, he is about to become a pawn in a renegade lord's plot to snatch the reins of government for himself. Also tied to the scheme are the mysterious Alec, St Vier's closest friend and confidant; Michael Godwin, a young lord who dabbles in swordcraft; and the noble house of Tremontaine, custodian of much of the power sought by the Duke of Karleigh.

There's no magic in *Swordspoint*, at least not of the spellcasting variety. If by magic, though, one means the gifts of sparkling wit, elegant storytelling, and an intimate closeness to characters, then *Swordspoint* is well-supplied indeed, and Ellen Kushner is a sorceress of no mean ability.

GAMEPLAY

Kevin J. Anderson

Signet 0-451-16236-6 \$3.95

At the end of the first book in the *Gamearth* trilogy, I was puzzled and confused (see "The Role of Books," *DRAGON* issue #147). Now I've finished the second book, and I'm less confused—but I still have considerable reservations about Kevin Anderson's depiction of the interaction between games and reality.

It's certainly true that one can't explain all of a trilogy's mysteries in the first book. But some of the revelations in *Gameplay* shouldn't have been delayed. There's no reason, for example, for not making it clear from the first that Melanie the Rulewoman is a Gamearth character belonging to Melanie, the "Outsider" who is one of Gamearth's four player/referees. This time, too, the Gamearth characters are far clearer in their references to (and reliance on) the Book of Rules, from which quotes are liberally sprinkled throughout.

What's also clearer, though, is that the game design of the Gamearth campaign is peculiar in the extreme. If Anderson's intent is to draw parallels between real-world RPGs and "real" fantasy realms, it's a vision that isn't likely to be realized.

Consider: Gamearth's players handle a minimum of two characters at a stretch, and sometimes several. Most of the time, in fact, one player is running an entire adventuring party on his (or her) own. That's a far cry from the usual RPG, where gamers are encouraged to limit themselves to single characters. Then there's the multiple-referee issue. Most campaigns that divide up game master chores do so in a spirit of cooperation, whereas Gamearth's co-creators often work deliberately at cross purposes.

And those are just the external differences. Gamearth is also the only RPG campaign I know that's designed as an unreal world in which the PC and NPC populace knows of its place in the larger game. TSR's *WORLD OF GREYHAWK®* and *FORGOTTEN REALMS™* settings, Chaosium's *Glorantha*, and countless others are all defined as worlds unto themselves, no more or less real to their inhabitants than our Earth is to us. By extension, Gamearth is also unique in defining the players as its explicit gods. This last is a critical distinction; in most campaigns, the DM acting for an imaginary god must do so "in character" as the god in question. But where the player is himself a god, there's no such constraint and thus no pressure to maintain internal logic in the campaign.

The problem is that Anderson's premise

is intriguing only as long as it stays plausible to the reader. As the differences between real RPGs and the Gamearth construct become clearer, though, plausibility suffers and so does the impact of the book's climaxes. While the conclusion of *Gameplay* wields major-league pyrotechnics, it leaves readers trapped squarely between the atypical game design and the still-unanswered question of just who's running Anderson's multiverse. The third book may resolve the latter issue, but unless it also explains the former, the trilogy will likely be a curiosity rather than a triumph.

Recurring roles

Catfantastic (DAW, \$3.95) is a silly title, and the cover art (though skillful) is irrelevant. But the stories in this Andre Norton/Martin H. Greenberg anthology are diverse and winning, populated by felines well worth meeting. Norton's own tale is among her best recent work. Donna Farley cleverly mixes tortoise-shell magic and the secrets of lost socks, and Mercedes Lackey's spacefaring cat contributes the book's best and truest one-liner. Appearances notwithstanding, this is a first-class collection.

Unexpected directions mark the conclusions of two very different trilogies from recent months. Paula Volsky sidesteps the full-fledged high tragedy hinted at earlier, as *The Sorcerer's Curse* (Ace, \$3.95) begins several generations after the preceding volume. It's a mixed success; Volsky's plots take on a somewhat irritating repetitiveness, but some of the tragic sense lingers in a solid climax. Meanwhile, Pamela Dean's *The Whim of the Dragon* (Ace, \$4.50) completes the saga of the Secret Country in intricate and somewhat bewildering fashion. "Trilogy" is a deceptive word in this case; this third volume concerns the same plots and personalities as the first two but treats them with maturity an order of magnitude more complex than that found in the earlier books. The effect is rather like opening a college physics text after reading five chapters of a junior-high science book. Dean remains a skillful writer, but the jump is unsettling, to say the least.

More reliable, oddly enough, are a pair of middle volumes. *Revenge of the Valkyrie* (Ace, \$3.50) tells a more cohesive tale than Thorarinn Gunnarsson's previous *Song of the Dwarves*, but the Norse lore still feels right, and Gunnarsson still has at least one good saga left in his helmet. This time around, there are fewer gods and a race of quasi-immortal man-wolves; the dragon on the cover stays almost entirely in the background.

Lords of Thlassa Mey (Del Rey, \$3.95) continues Dennis McCarty's cycle concerning Palamon, sometime knight of the goddess Pallas and now king of Careia, in McCarty's vaguely Shakespearean style. The noble characters still converse in

Continued on page 87

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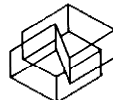
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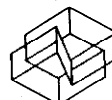
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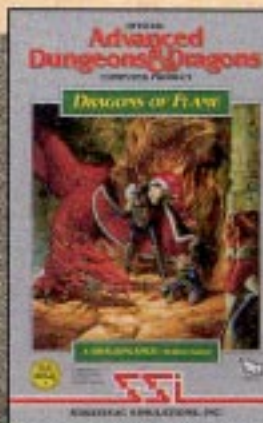
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THE ROLE OF Computers

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Dogfighting, from Vietnam to the Milky Way



During the next year, you can expect many programs to appear for 16- and 32-bit systems, particularly for the Apple Macintosh II, Apple IIGS, PC/MS-DOS, Atari ST, and Commodore Amiga computers. You'll also witness the continued growth of video game systems. Both Atari and Sega plan new 16-bit systems, with Atari's introduction being a very portable video game. There will be even more new products for the Nintendo Entertainment System and Atari 7800 units.

A word of warning to those of you who have been submitting game clues: We also use various on-line services for electronic mail and gaming. We've noticed that some readers are downloading game hints from bulletin board services, typing them up, and submitting them to us with their names attached as the authors of the hints. Please don't rip off game hints from those who have diligently studied and completed software games and have posted their hints to help others. When you mail a stolen game hint to us, and we don't catch the theft and your hint is published, you look extremely small in the eyes of other readers who know where that hint came from!

The "no rip-off" policy doesn't apply only to game hints: Buy your software as well. When you illegally duplicate a game, whether from a friend's disk or from an on-line bulletin board, you steal money from the game's author. That author has spent hundreds of hours coding the entertainment and, in most cases, is trying to make a living from this extremely difficult work. Sure, we argue against copy protection of games, but if some gamers continue to illegally duplicate games, what choice do the publishers have but to protect their software? The simple answer is that ethics apply to both buyer and publisher. Let's make this world a more honest place to game in.

Reviews

Computer-game ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb

Sierra On-Line, Inc.

P.O. Box 485
Coarsegold CA 93614
(209) 683-4468

Silpheed

PC/MS-DOS version \$34.95

This dogfighting arcade event is guaranteed to, create joystick callouses. Available for PC/MS-DOS, Apple IIGS, Macintosh,

Atari ST, and Commodore Amiga micros, *Silpheed* returns to those days of yesteryear when space arcade games required great concentration and numerous carbohydrates to wing your way to victory. Created in Japan, this high-action arcade game by Game Arts is now distributed by Sierra.

In 3032, an alien space shuttle is discovered orbiting Pluto. By duplicating its structure, Earth begins colonization of the universe, and the Milky Way Union evolves. Unfortunately, a brutal outlaw leader has stolen *Gloire*, a newly built battleship. He is now attacking the Union's main defense base, and there's no time to form a defense fleet. You've been selected to pilot a Super Air Fighter SA-08 *Silpheed* prototype in an attack on *Gloire*. You must acquire weaponry, fight wave after wave of enemy fighters, and finally engage in deadly combat with *Gloire*.

This is nonstop action from start to finish. When you have fought one wave, you can receive servicing, extra weapons, and shields. There are four battle areas: space, above planets, in the fortress, and in the asteroid belt. Twenty successful steps (combats) are required before you face *Gloire*. You have many options, from increasing your ship's destructive power to making your ship totally invincible. Your ship's cannons can also be directed in specific fire alleys, or you can use auto-aiming that locates enemy ships and other obstacles and eliminates them. Enemy opponents range from *Kaile*, famous for its suicidal attacks, to *Lazel*, a large fighter that is almost impossible to defeat.

After concentrated play, you'll soon see patterns emerging for some of the attackers. We recommend that you concentrate on earning weapons in the first part of the game and learn which weapons are the most effective for various battle scenarios. *Silpheed* is highly addictive, extremely colorful, and requires hours of enjoyable practice to master. We've been at this game for over 40 hours and still haven't confronted *Gloire*. The best advice anyone can offer you is to learn from your experience; you don't get many second chances.

Three-Sixty Pacific, Inc.

2105 South Bascom
Campbell CA 95008
(408) 879-9144

Thud Ridge

PC/MS-DOS (EGA) version \$39.95

The war in Vietnam was highly dependent upon air strikes by jet fighters and bombers. Not only did air supremacy help stall enemy counteroffensives, but it also riddled supply lines on the Ho Chi Minh trail. Now you can pilot a Republic F-105 Thunderchief—a "Thud"—to strike targets at Mach speed while avoiding contact with enemy MiGs. Add SAMs, flak, and a MiG ace known as the Grey Ghost, and you have an idea of what 'Nam air combat was all about.

Three-Sixty has produced *Thud Ridge*, a combat flight simulator that presents the Vietnam air war for computer pilots. In format for PC/MS-DOS computers, *Thud Ridge* presents 10 missions. The degree of simulation difficulty is decided by selecting either Lieutenant, Captain, or Colonel level. Should you succeed in completing Missions 1 through 3, you earn the Bronze Star. Completion of Missions 4 through 6 earns you the Silver Star and promotion to Colonel. Accomplish all 10 missions, and you'll join the ranks of the few who were known as Wild Weasel Thud Drivers.

If you've piloted other flight simulators, *Thud Ridge* won't leave you tingling with realistic screen displays. *Thud Ridge* does offer exciting forays into enemy territory with far fewer commands to learn in order to operate your aircraft. There is no digitized sound, just tinny beeps that indicate weapons firing and so on. Control of your aircraft can be handled by joystick, keyboard, or keypad. The joystick or keypad is used to direct the jet's flight; the keyboard lets you input other control commands.

The game possesses four basic screens, each offering different aspects of your flight. By pressing the "1" key, for example, you can view the aircraft functions screen. The main display presents a real-time view of your Thud and the geography of the area over which you are flying, as well as weapons and firing information. As your plane has an automatic weapons cursor, you must be certain to look at the cursor's shape to determine the right weapon to use against a target.

Press the "2" key, and the Engine Function Panel appears below your real-time graphics display. Here, factors such as the engine and nozzle temperatures and fuel levels are presented on gauges. Other data includes your throttle, an afterburner indicator (the afterburner enables you to escape MiGs), the elapsed time of your mission, a radar-lock warning, and a graphic display of your Thud and the weapons remaining aboard. Also available are a screen that shows you where SAM installations are located and a map screen. The latter display makes it easy to determine your course to the target areas.

Thud Ridge is a flight simulator for gamers who haven't taken the time to try such games before because of control complexities. *Thud Ridge* is far easier to learn than other simulations. It lacks the graphic quality of other offerings but does present exciting and almost arcade-like action. A cut-out keyboard template would have been useful for those who don't enjoy reading manuals; thank heavens the user guide is only 25 pages long.

A major drawback is that the game requires you to keep your original game disk in drive A even after copying the files to your hard disk drive. This copy protection is antiquated and leaves users in a lurch should the original disk be damaged.

Capcom U.S.A., Inc.

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Strider

Nintendo version \$49.95

Strider is the name of a secret group that specializes in stopping evil wherever it arises. The assignment for the player, Hiryu, is to rescue a teammate from captivity. Along the way, Hiryu discovers a terrible secret that could destroy the world. He must put an end to this threat while armed with a cipher and a sword that shoots plasma arrows.

The game is played in two different locations. One is the home base of the Striders, called Blue Dragon. From here, Hiryu can not only analyze disks that he picks up from various locations on Earth, but he can also be transferred to different cities as well. Hiryu can move, jump, and use his cipher on the many enemies that he faces. Some locations in the cities are accessible only with one of five keys, and Hiryu may have to return to a city several times before the game is completed.

Along the way, Hiryu accomplishes a specific task by destroying an enemy or by rescuing a person. He gains experience levels that add to his health and energy points. Energy points are expended through the use of power tricks such as shooting electric balls, healing, and warping back to the Blue Dragon. Hiryu can also pick up energy and health points from defeated opponents who leave capsules behind. Three types of boots, if found, can also help Hiryu: magnetic boots that allow Hiryu to climb with ease; aqua boots that give him the ability to walk on water; and attack boots that slay enemy agents.

This is a good arcade game for the Nintendo Entertainment System. There are a few places where you might get stuck, but otherwise we found the game quite easy to play. We finished the game in five days, and that is the only reason why this game has a four-star rating instead of five stars. The graphics, story, and sound are excellent. You can save your games, and (thanks to a password feature) no one else can change your game-in-progress. *Strider* is a definite must-buy for Nintendo gamers!

News and new products

If you use an Atari 2600, Atari 7800, or Atari XE video game system, hang on to your I/O device. Atari (408-745-2000) has announced 20 new games for these systems. *Barnyard Blaster* and *Sentinel* are for the 7800's Light Gun option. Other 7800 titles include *Commando*, *Ikari Warrior*, *Xenophobe*, *Planet Smasher*; *Ninja Golf*, *Mat Mania Challenge*, *White Water Madness*, and *Mean 18 Ultimate Golf*. Their retail prices will range from \$18.00 to \$35.00. For the 2600, you'll find *Off the Wall*, *Road Runner*, *Radar Lock*, *Ikari*

Warrior, *White Water Madness*, *Street Fighter* and *Motorodeo*, with *Rampage* and *Double Dragon* being released by Activision. *Sentinel* and *Shooting Arcade* will also be available for the 2600's Light Gun. Prices are \$10.00 to \$18.00. For the Atari XE, there's *Commando*, *Super Football*, *Tower Toppler*, *Xenophobe*, *Midi Maze*, and *Deflektor*; prices are \$20.00 to \$35.00 each. According to an Atari spokesperson, there will be nearly 200 Atari game titles available by the end of this year.

Broderbund Software (415-492-3200) has announced that two of its award-winning programs, *The Ancient Art of War* and *The Ancient Art of War at Sea*, have been upgraded to support VGA and full, 16-color EGA graphics on PC/MS-DOS machines and compatibles. Additionally, all on-disk copy protection for those games has been removed.

From Electronic Arts (415-571-7171) comes *Decisive Battles of the American Civil War, Volume Two*, which offers a new graphics system for EGA/VGA users for high-quality screen displays. The game includes scenarios for the battles of Gettysburg, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Gaines Mill, and Stones River. The system presents battles with authentic detail and flavor. Created by the affiliated label Strategic Studies Group, this is for PC/MS-DOS machines at \$39.95.

Another new SSG offering distributed by Electronic Arts is *Fire King*, an action/adventure game for the Commodore 64/128 at \$29.95. The game starts with the death of the Fire King, ruler of the land and presumed to be its most powerful wizard. The land is plunged into chaos and a mystery must be solved. You must journey through the land while fighting the creatures of chaos that threaten to overrun it.

Ommicron Conspiracy has appeared from Epyx (415-366-0606). In this humorous game, you become a Star Police Captain, Ace Powers. His assignment is to bust an intergalactic drug ring; he must find the alien drug lab, ferret out the evil Mentants, and stop a mad scientist. There are over 250 rooms to explore, many extremely weird characters, and some genuinely entertaining dialog. All selections are made from icons and dialog with joystick/cursor controls; there is no laborious typing of commands. In the manual, players will find tips and hints, including in-depth solutions. The game is available for PC/MS-DOS computers at \$49.95.

A graphic text adventure, *The Twilight Zone*, has been released by First Row Software Publishing (215-662-1400). This game takes the player into another dimension; the story starts with the player in his messy home but weaves him into a typically complex plot with a typical *Twilight Zone* ending. There are over 85 graphic screens. The game is available for PC/MS-DOS computers for \$39.95.

Infocom (617-492-6000) has released *Arthur: The Quest for Excalibur*. This is

the latest graphic, interactive-fiction title from Infocom and casts the player as the youthful Arthur on a quest for Excalibur, the legendary sword that will make him King of England. Excalibur has been stolen by the evil King Lot; to win it back, the player must develop the kingly qualities of wisdom, chivalry, and experience, which will also prove him worthy of the throne. This must be done within three days or Lot will usurp Arthur's legacy. There are more than 100 graphics that evoke images of medieval England. *Arthur* offers features such as Merlin's crystal ball (which reveals helpful, on-screen hints), an "undo" command that lets players rescind even the most foolhardy decisions, and optional on-screen mapping. It's available for the Apple Macintosh and the Commodore Amiga for \$49.95, and for Apple II and PC/MS-DOS systems for \$39.95.

Konami Inc. (312-215-5100) and its subsidiary, Ultra Software Corporation, have released three new titles. In *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, the four heroes in the half-shells go up against the evil Foot Clan with lightning-fast ninja moves to protect the sewers of New York. *Defender of the Crown* is a medieval adventure that challenges the player's skills of strategy and strength with daring swordfights and jousts. *The Adventure of Bayou Billy* contains a lot of zappin', shootin', and drivin', being the first video adventure to combine these different game elements.

A matched pair of computer games is being offered by Lucasfilm Games (415-662-1800). Both are based on the movie, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. The action game captures many of the film's best chase and fighting sequences. The graphic adventure parallels Indy's quest for the most precious magical amulet in the Western world, the Holy Grail. Both games are faithful to the plot, look, and personality of the film. The graphic adventure is available for PC/MS-DOS, Commodore Amiga, and Atari ST machines for \$49.95. The action game is available for the C64/128 for \$29.95 and for the Commodore Amiga and Atari ST for \$39.95.

MicroProse Software (301-771-1151) has introduced a new arena of armored land warfare with its release of *M1 Tank Platoon* for PC/MS-DOS machines. This simulation recreates combat in the M1 Abrams, the 63-ton main battle tank of the U.S. Army. However, with this offering, you are put in command of four tanks at once, in a total of 16 battle positions. You can call in other forces to aid in the battle, including infantry, helicopters, jets, artillery, and other tanks. *M1 Tank Platoon* takes place in a 16,000-acre battle zone with zooming maps to show whatever is visible to friendly forces. No retail price has been set as of this writing.

Mindscape (301-771-1151) has released several new products: *Road Blasters*, *720° Infiltrator*, *The Last Starfighter*, and *Road Runner*. In *Road Blasters*, you must survive the ultimate contest of futuristic

warfare as you spin around turns and blast opponents with lasers in this electrifying version of the arcade smash hit. In *720°*, you shoot around hairpin curves and over the locals of Skate City. In *Infiltrator*, you command a state-of-the-art chopper. *The Last Starfighter* places the player into that classic science-fiction movie. And there's *Road Runner*, with Wile E. Coyote, in a fast-paced arcade game with the clever animation and excitement of the arcade hit.

Shinobi (from Mindscape) offers ninja might and magic as you confront an army of evil terrorists. Use your ninja stars to fend off thugs, mongos, and green ninjas; use ninja magic against the evil Ring of Fire. This adaptation of the coin-op hit is available for the C64/128 at \$34.95, for the Commodore Amiga and Atari ST for \$49.95, and for PC/MS-DOS computers for \$39.95.

Gauntlet II is now available from Mindscape. It has over 100 challenging mazes, with color graphics, smooth-scrolling animation, digitized sound effects and voices in all versions but the C64/128, and an instant add-a-player feature. This should be another hit for Mindscape. It is available for PC/MS-DOS, C64/128, Commodore Amiga, and Atari ST computers.

Mindscape's *Captain Blood* offers science-fiction fans a new dimension in gaming by incorporating award-winning visual effects and a new icon language. Fractal and vector graphic techniques are used to produce amazing illustrations. Digitized music and sound effects occur as you explore more than 32,000 planets. You must search the galaxy and interrogate aliens to track down the five clones that are draining your energy force. *Captain Blood* is available for the Atari ST, Amiga, and Macintosh for \$49.95, the Apple IIGS for \$44.95, the C64/128 for \$34.95, and the IBM and its compatibles for \$39.95.

It looks as though the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) has caught the fancy of more than gamers. AT&T is said to be looking into the feasibility of sending Nintendo games to NES systems via telephone lines. Imagine what the phone bills will be if this comes to pass! Parents thought they had problems with their children's phone bills already!

Knights of Legend is coming from Origin Systems (603-644-3360), with the industry's most comprehensive combat system. The game leads the player on a dynamic journey through a medieval world of intriguing quests. There are over 30 towns to explore with hundreds of unique and colorful personalities to meet along the way. This game also features the first modular design in a fantasy computer game. Five additional modules are planned, each with its own distinct quests, characters, creatures, and countrysides. *Knights of Legend* will be available for IBM-PC/Tandy/compatibles, Apple II series, and C64/128 computers for \$49.95.

The first book in the Silicon Valley im-

print series from Osborne/McGraw-Hill (212-512-3851) is *Falcon Air Combat: A Fighter Pilot's Guide to Falcon, the F-16 Flight Simulator*. Written by Pete Bonnani, this book discusses Spectrum HoloByte's flight simulator and shows players how to fly an F-16 while engaging in air-to-ground and air-to-air combat. The author is a former F-16 pilot and weapons/tactics trainer with the U.S. Air Force. The second book is *The King's Quest Companion*, by Peter Sears, which is a guide to accompany the series of four King's Quest games from Sierra.

Sega (800-USA-SEGA; 415-742-9300 in Calif.) is rolling out a new arcade video system utilizing 16-bit technology: Genesis. Genesis will not only allow gamers to play their B-bit cartridges on 16-bit machines with the Power Base Converter, but also allows them to also experience state-of-the-art high definition graphics, full-spectrum color, stereo sound, and lifelike animation. Among the software titles coming for the Genesis are *Altered Beast*, *Space Harrier II*, *Super Thunder Blade*, *Tommy Lasorda Baseball*, *Thunder Force II*, and *Ghouls 'n Ghosts*.

Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap, the third adventure of the series, is coming soon for Sega systems. You've beaten the Meka Dragon but have been cursed by its ghost. Now you've changed shape—into a little dragon. Only the Salamander Cross can turn you back into a man, but before you find it, other monsters will change your shape as well.

Storm Across Europe and *Red Lightning* have been released by Strategic Simulations, Inc. (408-737-6800). The first game is a strategic-level World War II game that encompasses the entire conflict in Europe. Up to three players control every facet of the war, with the computer able to control the Allies or the Russians. Multiple scenarios and the ability to change starting levels for each country allow for endless variations. *Storm Across Europe* is available for the C64/128 for \$59.95. *Red Lightning* depicts a conflict in central Europe between NATO and Warsaw Pact nations. Modern air and land weapon systems are included, such as the Soviet T-80 tank and the U.S. F-117 stealth bomber. Every vehicle and aircraft is accounted for in this brigade/division-level game, available for the Atari ST and PC/MS-DOS machines for \$59.95.

Rambo III is coming from Taito. This role-playing adventure sends the player on a desperate mission to free Colonel Trautman from a heavily guarded fortress in the desolate plains of Afghanistan. Useful items left by a careless enemy help Rambo accomplish his goal and defeat an entire army. Available the C64/128, Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, and PC/MS-DOS machines, this game will cost from \$29.95 to \$37.95, depending upon format.

Clue corner

The Bard's Tale III (Interplay)

The most effective party for completing

this excellent game should include one hunter, one monk, one bard, one rouge, two conjurers, and one magician.

The greatest hurdle in completing the game is the killing of Brillhasti ap Tarj. Should this be managed, the old man will award 600,000 experience points. This also affords you a method of awarding this number of experience points an innumerable number of times through the Review Board process.

In Gelidia, cast the appropriate spells on the magic walls, but be careful when fighting the Black Wizards.

In Lucencia, listen carefully to the flower ballad and note the effects of each rose. The flowers must be given under the right circumstances. The Rainbow Dragon is a pushover; collect its blood and use it on the roseless rosebush.

In Malefia, beware of monsters! Spell points are used up quickly here. Find the seven statues and use their respective items on them. Ignore what they say. After you have found all of the statues, a door will appear on the 3rd level. This leads directly to Tarjan!

Corin Black
Roslyn, Dunedin, N.Z.

Battletech (Infocom)

1. When you start the game, invest your money in DEFhes stocks, which will get you the most money. Take your training missions at the school, but be sure to purchase a flak vest and an inferno weapon before entering training mission seven or eight; during one of those missions, there will be a little surprise for you. Try and escape the Citadel quickly, but you must make it out with the Chameleon Mech.

2. Head north to the Starport. When you reach the city, put your money back in DEFhes. You should meet Rex at the Kurita inaugural hall. If you go to the Mech-it-Lube and ask to become an apprentice, you should meet Edward, the tech. He will help you scavenge mech parts in the field. In my opinion, never use your own mechs in arena combat.

3. Explore the countryside around Starport; there are several small towns in the area. There is also a town at coordinates 54.00 and 50.80; do not go there until you discover and kill the traitorous Crescent Hawks member. Finally, search the medical records in area hospitals for a medic (one who is not a traitor). When you have Rex, Jason, Edward, and a medic, improve your mech skill (through combat), Edward's tech skill, and the medic's medical skill to their maximum values.

4. When you reach the inventor's hut in the northern part of the continent, your group must answer all his questions to gain entrance to the Star League cache nearby. Remember to search for Jeremiah Youngblood's Phoenix Hawk LAM in the cache. When you reach the final door, descend the ladder. You will be in a room that is a map of inner space. When you

touch the correct planets (see the instruction manual for the Draconis Rift), the computer will give you the white card for use in the Hyperpulse generator, and you'll win the game!

Tom Footitt
No address given

Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI)

In Tilverton, have a Knock spell ready in the good thieves guild. Cast it on the Wizard Locked door that leads to the treasure room. In the sewers, attack the trolls who ask if you are Bonegrinder. Avoid the trolls who are feeding crocodiles as they have no worthwhile items. In the Fireknives lair, there is a large, secret-door complex that is safe to rest within. Have your mages cast Protection From Normal Missiles before the final battle and pick off the mages with Magic Missiles. Be certain to check the armory first, however.

Garth Pricer
No town given, PA

If you are just starting to play, you have two methods of using an adventuring party: You can use the prerolled party, or you can make your own. If you want to make your own party, have at least one paladin, a thief, a cleric, and a magic-user. You may wish to add a ranger, too. The last slot you can probably fill with a non-human, multiclassed character. I suggest you not include any elfen characters; once an elf is slain, he or she is gone—permanently!

In Zhentil Keep, there are a lot of magical items. There is a magic shop where you can buy some new items such as a Dart of the Hornet's Nest. Don't break into many houses. You may also meet Olive Ruskettle, a female halfling Bard.

Be careful in Haptooth Village. There are a lot of drow soldiers about, and an efreet is running loose as well.

Don't try to fight anything that is at least two times your current level in hit dice. The hit dice are displayed in your Adventurer's Journal next to each creature's name. (This advice applies to ettins, too.) Black Dragons are easy, so don't worry about them!

In the sewers of Tilverton, be wary of trolls and crocodiles. There is one new magical item called the Girdle of the Dwarves.

Max Lee
Arcadia CA

Might and Magic I (New World Comp.)

In Sorpigal, in the northwest corner of the intersection near the passage to the outdoors and the stairs down to the cavern (look on your map if you don't understand what I just said), there is a secret door. Beyond that door is a man who will teleport you to the town of your choice for only one gem. Also, in the Soul Maze, turn your map upside-down to find out Sheltem's name.

David M. Zeuschner
Sierra Madre CA

The answer to the riddle of the Ice Queen is a human emotion. Be certain to visit her and answer her riddle twice.

The Silver Message offers clues on where to raise your statistics.

Castle Doom is at Mt. Doom; around coordinate A-1.

Behind one of the walls at the Inn of Al-gary is a Swze Pit. Jump in as many times as you wish for encounters. It's a great place for training low-level characters.

A few answers to Trivia Island riddles:

Q: Who has lost his sight?

A: Og.

Q: Who is the voluptuous one?

A: Lara.

Q: Who be ye?

A: I be me.

All of the passwords that Heratio the Harper gives you will eventually (if put in the right order) give you a vague clue about the Clerics of the South.

The Dungeon of Dusk has many levels and connects with Castle Dragadune.

Make sure you get the Gypsy to read your character's signs if you ever hope to get the Coral Key.

Wyverns carry much gold and offer much experience.

Be friendly to the Aliens; you gain nothing by being hostile to them.

Sean and Andrew Sim
Mississauga, Ontario

Wizardry V (Sir-Tech Software)

On level 5, near the entry to the Mad Room, is a secret passage that leads to a rope down to the 6th level and to a healing pool that can bring back dead characters. You can also reach this passage by making it through Mystery Theater.

On level 1, the laughing kettle is found not in the northeast corner but near N23 E22. Do not attack it!

When facing Evil Eyes (level 6), Katu, try to steal an item.

The Ring of Skulls increases armor class at the expense of aging your character.

Both the Scarlet Robes and Emerald Robes are aligned magical protections.

For the bronze key, look up Ironose.

For the ice key, look on level 6 in an apparently empty pavilion.

For the Bag of Tokens, you'll need to shut off the conveyor belt.

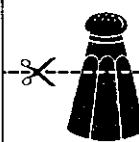
On Level 4, beyond the white field, is another of those magic pools. This one requires payment prior to use, but it also contains a Skeleton Key.

Gregg Sharp
Buckeye AZ

That's it for this month. Don't forget to submit your own *original* game hints. Most letters we receive are extremely thankful to everyone who has helped an adventurer through a game. Let's continue

this tradition. If you have completed a quest or have noted an important clue in your current game, pass it on to: The Lessers, 179 Pebble Place, San Ramon CA 94583. Your fellow gamers appreciate it! Until next month, game on! Ω

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MINIATURES

Sage

Continued from page 9

I have a book that says long needles were sometimes used in assassinations. What are the statistics for needles?

Treat them as chopsticks.

What kind of property does a samurai get at 9th level? How much property does a jito get?

Samurai do not get property at 9th level; they get the great kiai and followers. They are offered stewardship, not ownership, of various properties at earlier levels. A jito (the stewardship offered to a 7th-level samurai) generally manages one to three villages for his daimyo.

How much does Oriental equipment weigh? How large and heavy are grenades?

Use the figures for the nearest equivalent from the regular AD&D rules or real life. Rope or clothing, for example, weighs the same no matter where it is made. Grenades are about the size and weight of a flask of oil.

If a character loses a family heirloom or weapon, is he obligated obligation to regain it or die in the attempt? Must he commit suicide if regaining the item is impossible?

The character simply loses 5 points of honor (or 10 points if he is a samurai). The character is under no particular obligation to regain the item. The DM might choose to assess a further honor loss (2 points for refusing a challenge) if the character does not attempt to regain the item, or the DM might make an honor award (5 points for accomplishing a great deed) if the character successfully regains the item. No character is ever obligated to commit suicide due to loss of honor, though any character with a negative honor score is immediately removed from play (see *Oriental Adventures*, page 35).

In "Sage Advice" in issue #122, you said that the to-hit roll required for the special martial-arts maneuver Leap should be made against AC 10. Does this apply to to-hit rolls required for other maneuvers, such as Weapon Catch?

No. In general, combat special maneuvers require a to-hit roll vs. the armor class of the target character. The target character in a Weapon Catch is the character holding the weapon that is to be caught.

There is a large honor penalty for a ninja who allows his true identity to be discovered. Is there any penalty for a ninja who allows the fact that he is a ninja to be discovered?

No. A ninja always uses an alias and

keeps his real name and the details of his family history secret. Ninja should try to conceal the fact that they are ninja, but this is not a necessity. Hiding a ninja's true character class is very difficult in a campaign. It is not impossible, however, so the DM may assign a minor penalty if it leaks out; -1 honor point is plenty.

At the very bottom of page 50, there appears to be an introduction to a table. What happened to the table?

The text at the bottom of page 50 refers to table 55, which is located immediately above the text.

Isn't a lajatang a two-handed weapon?

Yes, the lajatang entry in table 49 (page 41) should be boldfaced.

What is the conversion rate between non-Oriental gold pieces and Oriental tael and ch'ien? What about copper, silver, electrum, and platinum pieces?

Table 46 (page 38) gives conversion rates. Gold, electrum, and platinum are not accepted as currency in Kara-Tur, so these coins must be sold for the market value of the metal in them. The market value of one gold piece is 2-7 (1d6 + 1) tael (see page 38). Extrapolating, a platinum piece is worth 11-30 (1d20 + 20) tael. The market price of gold and platinum varies independently, so it is possible for the price of platinum to be low while the price of gold is high. Electrum is mostly gold, so its price varies with the price of gold: an electrum piece is worth half the current value of a gold piece.

A ninja-to can have a secret compartment in the hilt. How much can be held in the compartment?

The compartment is very small; it can hold one dose of poison or an item the size of a finger ring or coin.

What are the rules for Oriental characters fighting with a weapon in each hand? What is the limit of the kensai two-weapon ability? Obviously, a kensai can't use two katanas—or can he?

The rules are the same as those for non-Oriental characters; see the 1st Edition *DMG* (page 70) or the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* (page 96). Any Oriental weapon that is the equivalent of a dagger or hand axe can be used as a second weapon (see *Oriental Adventures*, table 48, page 41). A kensai's second weapon must be a dagger or hand axe (or an equivalent).

Can a character with high dexterity spend extra slots on fighting with two weapons and avoid the two-weapon penalty?

No. Only kensai of 7th level and above

have the ability to fight with two weapons at no penalty.

Page 8 says that a ninja gains a 10% bonus for high dexterity, but page 19 says he does not. Which is correct?

Page 19 is correct.

Table 13 (page 14) says that ninja can use any weapon, but a footnote says that they must learn only ninja-preferred weapons. What happens when a high-level ninja has learned all the ninja weapons?

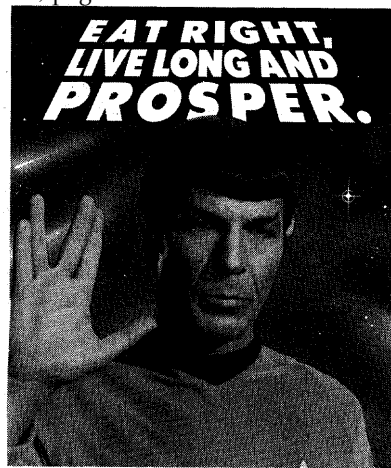
A ninja can learn nonninja weapons in two ways. First, he can use slots from his other class. Second, once he is proficient with all ninja weapons, he can choose any weapon.

What are the statistics for a badger hengeyokai (mentioned on page 13)?

A badger is a "raccoon dog" in Oriental parlance. The raccoon dog is listed on table 11 (page 12).

What is the initiative modifier for a character who knows iaijutsu?

There is none. The character simply has the ability to draw or change the weapon at no penalty. The character also has a better chance to surprise opponents under certain circumstances. See *Oriental Adventures*, page 99. Ω



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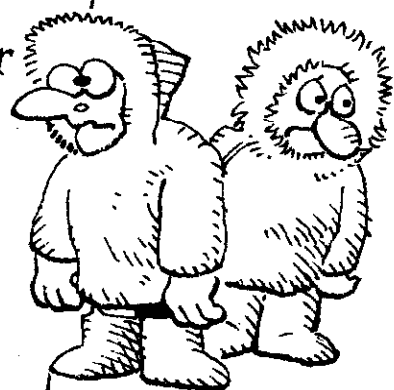
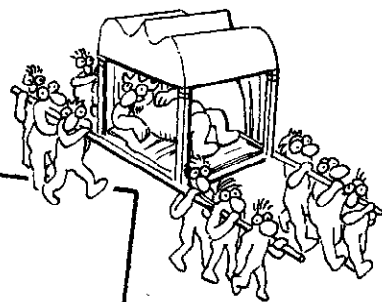
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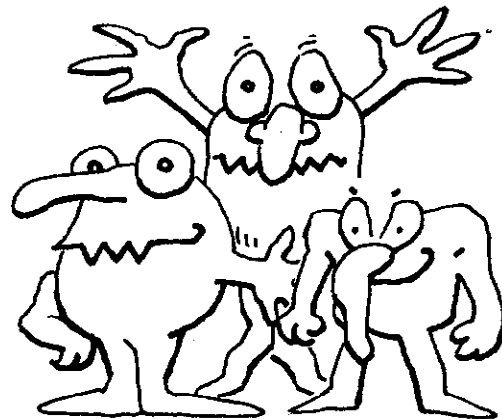
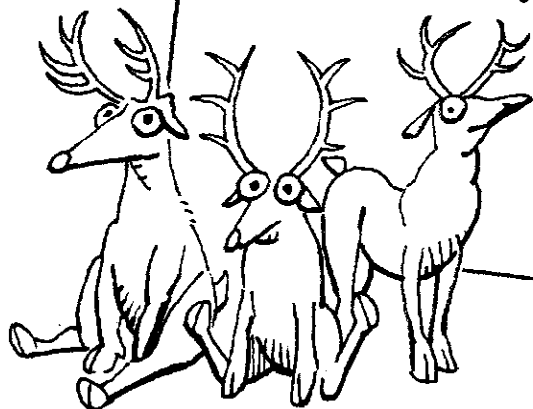
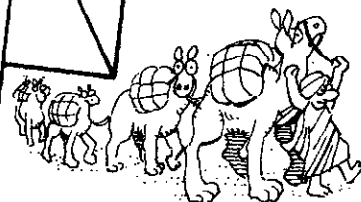


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Forum

Continued from page 7

this does not require a party of all-evil characters. Chaotic characters will certainly reason that the king has more than enough wealth, and that they are free to take what they wish. Good characters may be doing this for the greater good of all mankind, working with an evil or neutral character grudgingly to achieve this goal. (How often do utterly scrupulous agents get chased by the police in games such as the TOP SECRET® game?) Neutral characters could be doing it for those reasons and many others. As a matter of fact, the only character who couldn't be caught in that situation is a lawful one (unless it was all a mistake).

Daniel Reardon attacks any and all evil-aligned characters. I agree with him that the purpose of the game is to have fun, but I don't think that demands that everyone must promote cooperation and teamwork. Why, then, do we also play computer adventure games and solo modules? I think the lure of adventure and excitement attracts us. If everyone is good, and no one is chaotic or evil, then all the characters are either neutral good or lawful good. What kind of role-playing can you get out of that? Conflicting personalities may make good role-playing, but it won't last through a campaign.

Thus, both good and evil characters and adventures have their values. Chaotic neutral and lawful neutral characters are often more fun to role-play. As a matter of fact, there are only two alignments that I believe are not conducive to enjoyable role-playing and adventure. First, the strongly chaotic-evil character is the embodiment of destruction, the essence of the maniacal character that the good-promoting players are against. It might be possible to play a watered-down version of that alignment, such as a sometimes-unpredictable evil character or a somewhat cruel chaotic neutral. Actually, chaotic evil is not the ultimate evil. Neutral evil is more so; it doesn't care about law or chaos, only evil, much as neutral good (not lawful good) is pure and total good, and true neutral is untainted by anything. That brings me to the other alignment I am against: true neutral. Such a character rarely gains any of the enjoyment of role-playing, and such personality traits as "aloof" or "selfish" can show different aspects of a neutral alignment while still allowing good, chaotic, evil, or lawful beliefs. After all, chaotic neutral means totally chaotic, neutral good is totally good, etc., so what is neutral neutral? Druids should be lawful neutral, chaotic neutral, or neutral good, depending on how they carry out their duties.

All the published campaign worlds are neutral and provide adventures for anyone. Surely Gary Gygax, Ed Greenwood, Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, and the rest know what they're doing. Any adventure in any part of any world is made not by the DM but rather by the players and thus by their alignments, the ultimate expression of their beliefs.

Toby Myers
Hamilton NY

I bought my latest issue of DRAGON Magazine [issue #145], and as always I was reading "Forum" when I came across the letter by Michael Townsend in White Hall, Md. I wrote this letter to show there still are people who care that there are lone players out there. Here are some tips on how to bring a group together. First, come up with a flyer telling what game you are interested in playing and what type of player

(serious or casual) you want. Then copy this many times (at about \$0.10 a photocopy, this is not bad). Then take these copies to bookstores and hobby stores that sell the game you play. Ask if you can leave some copies at the register (if anybody buys something, he will see them). Also, if you are buying game supplies and you notice another person buying supplies, strike up a conversation. See if this person wants to get into a game or has friends who play. The more, the merrier! That's how I meet my friends.

Steve Williams
Lakeland FL

Given the focus on castles in issue #145, I would like to present what may be a somewhat unusual perspective on the place of castles in an AD&D game fantasy world. The central idea of this perspective is that medieval-style castles and the AD&D game are in many ways incompatible.

Castles evolved as methods of defense in our nonmagical world because, until the advent of gunpowder, they were virtually impenetrable. Unlike what is seen in movies, on TV, or in fantasy novels, castles almost never fell to assault. Prolonged sieges and starvation or an internal traitor who opened the gates were required for them to fall. This was the only justification for the outrageous expenditures in money, time, and manpower the average castle required. Large castles could take as long as five years to build, if not longer, and only greater nobility and royalty could muster the funds necessary (often through oppressive taxes).

Castles were impenetrable simply because their walls were impossible to pass. Walls could not be climbed without the use of ladders or other siege equipment; a very small number of men could easily repel 10 times their number attempting to go up and over a wall. Sapping (tunneling under a wall to remove its support) was the most effective means of assaulting a medieval castle but was extremely hazardous to the attacker and not very reliable, especially if the castle's foundation was deep in the ground. Catapults and trebuchets had little effect against well-designed and well-maintained walls. And, obviously, no one could fly over the top.

In an AD&D game world, all of these advantages are abrogated. A 1st-level thief has a reasonable chance of climbing any wall, and his skill increases to almost certain success as he increases in levels. No such ability existed or exists in our world. Granted, a thief can not climb a wall carefully guarded by vigilant men, but an *invisibility* spell is a quicker answer. All of this does not mention the second-level mage spell, *spider climb*, making success at climbing an actual certainty. A small squad of invisible thieves could easily climb a castle wall in the dark of night and open the gates—and once the gates are open, the citadel is virtually destined to fall. The whole idea of a castle is to defend with fewer men than are necessary for attack.

But why bother to climb the wall when flight over it is so easy? Pegasi, dragons, spells, flying brooms—the list of possibilities available in the AD&D game is far too long for delineation here. It takes little imagination to conjure myriad forms of misery to inflict upon those foolish enough to guard a castle. A squad of pegasi-mounted men might easily hold a gate long enough for the main army to punch through to victory. A mage could fly over the castle dumping *fireballs*, *cloudkills*, and other forms of pain on the castle's inhabitants. The magic-user need not even fly over the castle to gain attack lanes for his spells; a second-level *levitate* spell should easily raise him high enough to gain direct line

of sight to the castle's interior. The walls become less of a value as an enemy simply ignores them in the launching of attacks.

Perhaps flight is not possible in your world, or pegasi are far too rare for this to be an option. Still, the castle is not spared. If we cannot go over, we can go *through*. A *knock* spell could easily open the gates without internal assistance. The mage simply moves to the gate under the cover of an attack or *invisibility*. If the gate is *wizard locked*, use *dispel magic* or find a mage four levels higher than the caster of the *wizard lock*. *Disintegration* could easily open a hole or gate, or contribute to the undermining of a weak wall (the fifth-level spell *passwall* is designed for this exact purpose). Perhaps summoning aid is best; an earth elemental will make short work of most castle walls. But who needs to summon aid? Find an umber hulk and *charm* it (using the fifth-level spell *charm monster*). And this goes without mentioning the possibilities of the really powerful magic. May your DM never conceive of the idea of making your castle a target of a holy crusade with the services of a high-level cleric. Trot out an *earthquake* spell and scratch one castle. Five years of money and work are destroyed for almost nothing except the 10 hours the cleric spent to memorize the spell (oops, forgot the pinch of dirt, piece of rock, and lump of clay—material components). In case you have not read the *earthquake* spell description lately, that's 5d12 of structural damage, folks. The area of effect is probably not big enough to take out the entire castle, but it will make a very big hole in the wall.

And still we are not finished. Tunneling under the castle is now much easier. Both dwarves and orcs are more skilled miners than men, not to mention the *charmed* umber hulk or any other of the numerous underground tunnelers out and about in the AD&D game. *Disintegrate* and *passwall* work here as well.

Granted, most of the attacks I have mentioned have potential defenses: archers for the flying units, *dispel magic* on the *passwall* or *charm*, oil on the walls for climbers, etc. That defenses exist is not the issue. The key element is that the initiative lies with the attacker, and the defender must know the form of the attack to prevent and counter it. This means your castle is only as good as your intelligence about the enemy. Your enemy also has another advantage in that he can simply hold his most devastating attack and force you to waste your resources defending against skirmishes. That 3rd-level mage trying to *knock* your gate may be only a nuisance, but you must stop him or the gate is open and your throat is slit. When you are out of *dispel magic* spells, your castle is history. And if you're loaded up with *dispel magics*, how are you to counter the ruin your enemy will cause with his *fireballs*?

Castles were never meant to be assaulted, because there was no successful attack form against them. If you had a castle, your enemy had to starve you to death to defeat you, and that required time—time he would have to spend looking over his shoulder watching for a relief force. If a relief force caught him by surprise, he could find himself trapped, especially if there was a sortie from the formerly besieged force in the castle.

It is not my purpose to say no AD&D game world should have castles. Rather, I would like to suggest DMs think carefully about including castles in their worlds. Given the medieval level of physical technology in most campaign worlds, castles would still require huge expenditures in time and money but would offer far fewer

advantages. They are easily assaulted with low-powered spells and individuals; a team of 3rd-level thieves and magic-users will wreak havoc with the average castle. In many ways, the price is not worth it. Indeed, given the problems involved, it's possible that walls and castles as defensive structures might never have developed in many AD&D game worlds. The inhabitants of these worlds would spend their resources on training their armies and recruiting and training spell-casters. With the addition of BATTLESYSTEM™ rules, peasant levies become unattractive in an AD&D world. Morale is critical to absorb magical and unusual attacks, and peasants have little morale. Standing professional armies, however, are extremely expensive (just ask your Congressman).

Castles are not built today because the technology of our world has advanced far enough to render the stone wall useless as a defensive measure. I suggest the magic of the AD&D world renders them equally useless:

No name given

I have just finished perusing a copy of the AD&D 2nd Edition preview [in issue #142] that describes the dramatic revision changes, and issue #143 in which one of our Canadian brethren laments that all those sophisticated AD&D game players out there refuse to take him seriously because he is a mere follower of D&D games. My decade-plus of role-playing experience compels me to submit an opinion, widely held by my contemporaries. This opinion is really quite concise: "PHBT!"

AD&D game players are weenies and bedwetters; no self-respecting D&D game aficionado need beg their indulgence. Our battle-scarred group of graybeards has been involved in a very advanced style of play since early 1976, when we immediately grasped the power and potential of one of the opening lines in the original release: "[These] are *guidelines* to follow in designing your own fantastic-medieval campaign" [from *Men & Magic*, page 4]. Straightjacketed dabblers in the AD&D game and their pitiful reliance on external structures to aid them in negotiating the lovely, intricate labyrinth of role-playing are commonly the object of ridicule in the rarefied atmosphere of our gatherings. It was with contempt and loathing that we greeted the AD&D game with its execrable shift from "imagination rules" to "rules reign."

A refreshing trend seems to be emerging, however. The AD&D game preview, page 14: "This is part of our goal of increasing player choices and encouraging you to make the game your own." It's about time. You fellows have a lot of catching up to do. Perhaps this is the *perestroika* of the AD&D game?

Michael Henits
Rome, Italy
with Eric M. Paulson
London, England
and Gregory H. Graham
Colorado Springs CO

I would like to disagree with Ms. Reynolds letter in issue #144. Although I do agree that many of the AD&D game rules were taken from the original D&D game, and that the D&D game is a very good one, it is not better than the AD&D game!

I think that the AD&D game is better than the D&D game because the latter is illogical. Saying that a halfling cannot pursue thieving activity is simply stupid. Even the D&D material states

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that halflings engage in thievery (GAZ 8 *The Five Shires*, in particular.) Although some people could criticize the AD&D game because of its restrictions on certain races taking certain classes, the game system has logical reasons (e.g., dwarves cannot be druids because they don't live in the woods). Besides the ridiculous race restrictions, the D&D game also has fewer spells, a smaller monster selection, and fewer classes in general.

The evidence above should prove that the AD&D game is the better game. I do think that the D&D game is better for the less-serious role-players who like a simpler game and easier victories.

Joseph D'Amico
Wallington NJ

Hurrah for Ivy K. Reynolds in issue #144, for her views on the D&D game! Long have I sat watching people belittle this marvelous system.

Weapon specialization has always been a problem with the AD&D game, as no one is able to agree on how it should be utilized. The weapon-mastery structure in the D&D Masters Set presents a colorful comparison to the bland chart offered by its newer companion [in *Unearthed Arcana*]. Weapon mastery allows a character to carefully chose which weapon to master by allowing certain benefits to the character when he has reached a certain rank of mastery. These can be reviewed for the best effect to the PC. It also gives the player a sense of ability by ranking a PC as Basic, Skilled, Expert, Master, or Grand Master of his chosen weapon. The weapons are closely examined by giving only abilities that would suit. One can hardly imagine a thief with a dagger trying to disarm a fighter with a halberd!

The AD&D game's weapon specialization imbalances play at higher levels. Characters naturally become more proficient with weapons even though they are not technically learning any new, specific techniques with them. This is unrealistic to a degree that cannot be ignored. A character may be a brilliant swordsman, but he is not going to suddenly become more powerful overnight simply because he advances in level. The weapon-mastery system requires much of a PC who wishes to learn it. He must have the correct amount to pay his teacher, but that doesn't guarantee that he will be able to find a teacher who is genuine (characters would be surprised at the number of charlatans who might attempt to harm them). Also, as a PC advances his weapon mastery, it becomes increasingly hard to find acceptable teachers, and the chances to learn are much less. These adventures [to find teachers] could be extraordinarily dangerous, allowing the character to prove that he is worthy.

Anyone who has ever used the D&D system might have noticed that magic-users are allowed to gain levels of mastery just as fighters can. I personally allow this but with a penalty to the magic-user. As he trains, he gains no experience and loses 100 points of experience per day that he neglects his magical studies. This is the penalty one faces for such endeavors. This is not that perilous considering that the magic-users in the D&D game have the choice of only one weapon, the dagger, and so are much more limited than their AD&D game counterparts. Players may feel that the AD&D game is a system that largely depends on skill, but what I have said only proves otherwise. After all, a fun,

balanced, and realistic game is much better than an unbelievable campaign with unlimited power at the player's fingertips.

Robert Morrison
Calgary, Alberta

The June editorial (issue #146) very much disturbs me. While I am hoping Roger intended it as a thought-provoking entry instead of as a prediction, it certainly begs a good deal of discussion. Let me start out by refuting the basic premise of the editorial: A computer RPG is not an RPG. It is instead just what it is—a series of magnetic particles which, when interpreted by a disk drive, performs a given function. Think about the name RPG: It stands for role-playing game. Most certainly, there is no "role" involved in a binary program. Role-playing involves a deep interaction with an alternate persona, most often referred to as a character. This persona must interact with both its player and the master of the game, and the player and master must interact. In the case of traditional RPGs, that master is the game master—DM with regard to the AD&D game. When a so-called computer RPG is played, the computer becomes the master. I fail to see how the computer's actions could ever be referred to as interaction. Everything the computer does is by a program, which is given and known. Even random events are predictable; one *knows* they will be random. In the person-to-person RPG, the essence of spontaneity is still there. The player never knows what the GM might do next; the DM might use a table or use a die roll, or even make something up on the spot! Computers cannot and never will do so. Thus, the essential ingredient for the very existence for RPGs is missing: interaction.

Tracy Hickman is the next contributor to the RPG discussion. According to Mr. Moore, Tracy claims that it is harder and harder to get a group together, but the computer is always there. As much as I admire Mr. Hickman's work and ability, I must disagree with him on this point. Gamers who truly enjoy the game will find time to play. I know that's a bit overgeneralized, but it is true. I would hope that spouses knew of their fiancées' hobby before ever getting married; thus, they should know that it takes a little time every so often (and will be understanding about it). Jobs do not take up all of one's time. Besides, how better to relax than to play a game one enjoys in the company of one's friends?

Next on the agenda of the editorial is mention of multiplayer computer games. These can be found in two varieties. The first is just a standard computer game repeated so that more than one player can take part at the same time. This still does not fit the interaction mandate, as the computer still uses a set code for determining that action A causes result B, but merely does it twice (or three times, etc.). The second variety of multiplayer game is that of a network of players hooked through modem. I grudgingly admit that this could be considered an RPG, because it involves the computer only as a medium for communication. Basically, though, this variety is the same as having an AD&D game held over the phone but with print instead of voice communication. Not real exciting: no facial expressions, no secret notes, and—somewhat more importantly—no snacks "borrowed" from other players.

The concept of using the computer to aid DMing is brought up as a final word on the subject. Sure, having all the information on disk would be nice, but I did some quick calculating and just the 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*,



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Players Handbook, and *Monster Manual I* would take up 5250K of memory (about 37 floppy disks). That's only the basic information, too, and doesn't even take into account all the scenarios, characters, backgrounds, other books, etc. It also doesn't take into account the computer! So space will still be at a premium. Also, when a question by a player was asked, the GM would turn around, type a few lines into the computer, and spit out an answer, which would remove all the humanity. There would be no need for the GM, and again the RPG concept would die. Game masters are needed to bring the campaign to life using whatever methods best fit the moment. Computers cannot do this and will most likely never do so, due to the improbability of artificial intelligence reaching human levels. GMs are a special breed — they can't be reduced to the 0s and 1s of binary.

I admit I enjoy computer games as much as everyone else, but the idea that they will replace "live" playing is abhorrent to me. They can be enjoyed but on a completely different scale than that of real RPGs. To the editorial's final question, "Will computer RPGs eventually replace 'paper' RPGs?" the answer must be NO. If that happens, RPGs as a whole will vanish, just as the editorial's title mentions, to be replaced by a square of plastic, some wire, and lots of silicon. A sad day it will be.

Despite all my ranting, though, I do agree with one of Mr. Moore's comments. We can all hope that DRAGON Magazine will be around to witness whatever may befall the gaming industry. Happy 13th!

Alan Grimes
Warrensburg MO

I own Pool of Radiance and it is truly amazing. It captures all of the critical elements of the AD&D game and puts them all in a neatly wrapped package (with many extras). This was a blessing for me as well as many other gamers, I'm sure, because players and DMs are in short supply up here in Canada.

As for whether or not computer RPGs will ever replace textbook versions, I say no, or at least not completely! I don't think that a computerized version will ever replace taking out a few AD&D game books while in the car for a six-hour trip.

Jason Dunn
Calgary, Alberta

"R.I.P.: RPGs?" was an apt title for the editorial in issue #146. was talking about oblivion. Whether or not one enjoys computer games, they present a completely different challenge from TSR's AD&D or SJG's GURPS® game, no matter how sophisticated software becomes. The fun of role-playing lies in its creativity. The DM can design exactly the adventure he wants, weaving together pet personalities, private jokes, his acting talent, and favorite fictional or historical events. The players do the same with their characters. Then they add to each others' creations and inspire new ones. Anything that removes the game master kills this interaction. Nobody bothers to talk "in character" for a computer. The machine simply presents dilemmas, and the player resolves them. Personally, I play AD&D games to talk with friends and make up stories, not to figure out puzzles. Furthermore, role-playing is (or should be) cheap and controlled by the players. Computer gaming requires expensive machinery and depends on trained programmers. If paper-and-pencil games wither, then the freedom and imagination of role-playing must vanish.

I trust that this is not inevitable. Role-playing

does not require any more time than tennis, fishing, following professional sports, or any other adult pastime. Concise adventures of the DUNGEON® Adventures variety last only an hour or two and often have more coherent plots than thousand-room mega-mazes. We need a dedicated core to organize conventions and the like, but almost anybody can play or be a DM.

Of course all gamers grow older. And that colors our attitudes. Instead of lamenting our maturity, why can't we take advantage of it? Most of us feel that the D&D game should be generally accepted in the sense that basketball or Parker Brothers' MONOPOLY® game are. But despite occasional TSR ads in nationwide magazines, role-playing still spreads primarily by word-of-mouth. Perhaps as we grow older, we can introduce games to our adult friends and make the hobby respectable at last.

Thomas M. Kane
Farmington ME

The implied overview of "R.I.P.: RPGs?" seems to indicate that computer role-playing games can, or one day will, replace paper RPGs. This is not only untrue but also unrealistic.

What person in his right mind would choose to sit by himself in a room for eight hours looking at a computer screen, perhaps after four hours talking to it as a leisure pastime, as opposed to sitting down with a pizza, eight good friends, and a role-playing game?

One of the most singular and least talked about advantages of a role-playing game concerns the people you meet and associate with. Individuals who play RPGs are of such diverse backgrounds and age groups that it doesn't matter whether you're a top executive in a major corporation or a high-school student worried about his next math test. You share an experience of fun and adventure together. If you are friends at the beginning of a campaign in an RPG, by the end you're best buddies. If you don't know the other people in the game, by the end of the first session you have just made eight new friends.

Computer games are adventures for one or two people. A computer cannot adapt to the players' needs as a GM can. With a computer, players are trapped as there's no room for players to surprise the GM by doing the unexpected. True, a computer may never have to stop to check a chart or rule, but it may also never make friends, laugh at your jokes, or share a pizza.

Let's face it: The one thing that makes RPGs fun is the human factor. If you're frustrated with a computer game, the computer can't tell that and it won't give you that extra hint, clue, or push you could use right now in order to continue having fun. The computer can't experience and share in the satisfaction you feel after beating a particular monster, problem, or trap.

Best of all, once you finish a module, the GM starts work on the next one. Since the adventure comes from his mind, it's bound to be interesting — and at no cost. A new adventure on computer means a new adventure disk and that means \$35 to \$65.

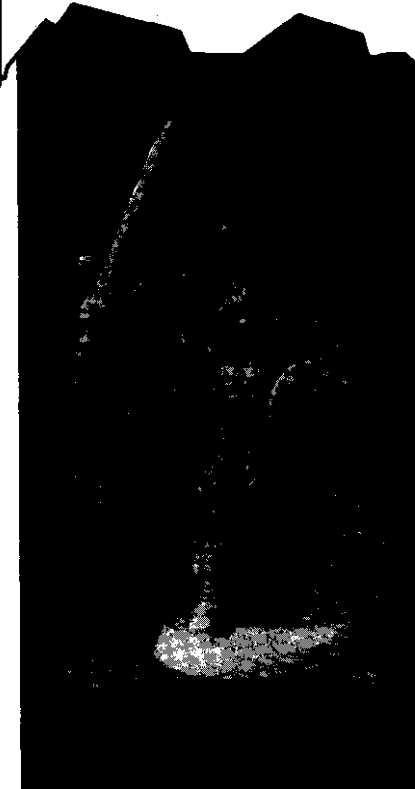
In closing, computer RPGs are best as fill-ins for times when you don't have a group to play with or as a means of hanging on until you find a group of humans to socialize with. Computers may be the world of tomorrow, but role-playing games are the world of imagination, and computers have no imagination.


Derek K. Lechman
President of the Arcadian
Guild Role-playing Organization
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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Through the Looking Glass



Heavy Spearorc (Tabletop Games/Alliance Miniatures)

Photographs by Mark Hammergren

Lasers and mages and tanks—oh, my!

©1989 by Robert Bigelow

Whenever I have spoken about a major miniatures event in this column, the event has always been associated with either the GEN CON® game fair or GAMA's ORIGINS™ convention. Now it's time to fill you in on the details of an all-miniatures convention.

One of the largest miniatures groups in the country is the Historical Miniature Gaming Society (HMGS), which has branches across the U.S. Its goal is to educate the public about gaming with historical miniatures, as well as about miniatures in general, by promoting and running three all-miniatures conventions: Cold Wars in February, Little Wars in April, and Historicon in July. Cold Wars and Historicon are always held on the east coast, and Little Wars is in the Midwest.

This year, I was fortunate to be able to attend Historicon as both a GEN CON

game fair representative and as vice president of HMGS Midwest. The convention was held in Harrisburg, Penn., on the fourth weekend in July. Harold Johnson, Dale Ridder, and I piled into a car for the 16-hour trip, arriving at the Penn Harris hotel on Thursday. Historicon took up the entire convention facility there, about 24,000 square feet. There was a dealers area for about 70 vendors, all selling different miniatures-related products: modern and World War II troops, tanks, ships, and soldiers of all types and scales; siege gear; buildings; trees; and rules and accessories. We could have come home with a trailer full of merchandise had not common sense prevailed.

The gaming area was about 12,000 square feet in size. Among its constantly shifting tables were 125 different minia-

tures games—fewer than at the GEN CON game fair, but here over 115 of these events were scenarios with an historical focal point; the GEN CON game fair had about 75. As was done at the GEN CON game fair, most games were set up at introductory levels so anyone could play.

One of the most popular games at Historicon was Minifig's LIMEYS AND SLIMIES game. This game is loosely based on ship-to-ship combat during the Age of Sail, with battles fought using armed and crewed 25mm ships, either individually or in fleets. You can attempt to tangle rigging, kill an enemy crew, or board ships. Extra details included sandbars, cities, docks, and gun positions surrounding the area. This game adds a whole new dimension to the term "plundering and looting."

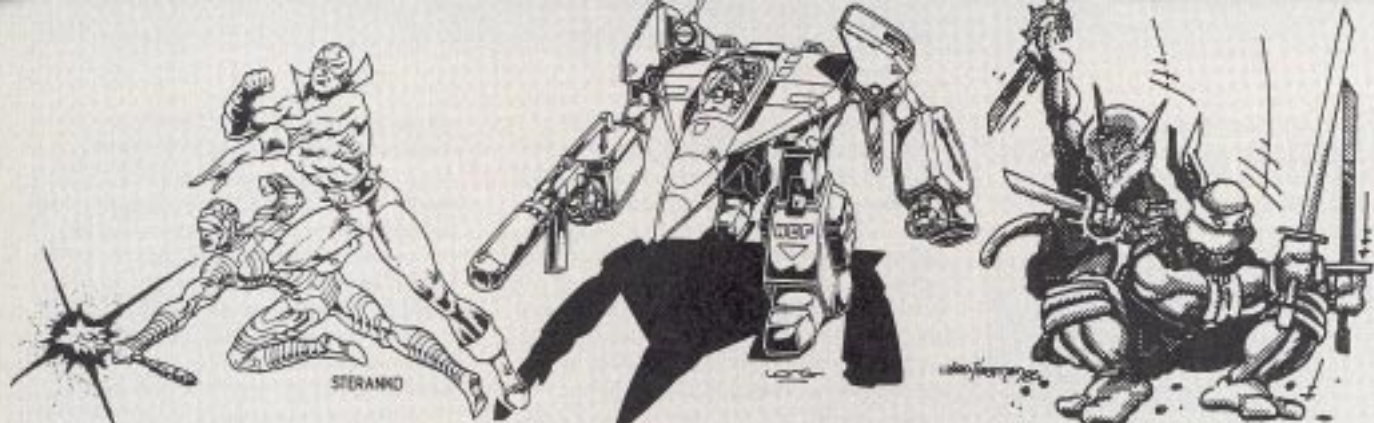
Another interesting game was a combination role-playing and miniatures event in which I was lucky enough to participate. In this scenario, Germany conquered England in World War II. Two children from the Royal Family were missing. The Germans were to recover the children and crush the resistance army by destroying its weapons factory. The Italians, who were actually American spies, were to find the children and take them away. The resistance meant to kill German troops and retain the children. I was assigned to be a German mole who was supposed to locate the resistance HQ and weapons factory. As it turned out, I was hired into the resistance and found the factory. The Germans died, the partisans died, the Italians left, and the Royal Family had to escape with the town "madame," who was actually an SAS agent.

Games Workshop's WARHAMMER™ 40,000 game was played, as were several SF games using 20mm figures. Naval battles abounded; some of the most famous encounters in history were reenacted, often with different results than history gives us. Cannons thundered as a 6' x 20' Napoleonic battle was relived. Civil War actions, both American and English, were refought. But the best of them all was Duke Siegfried's walk through the most famous colonial battles in the Zulu War. His exacting scenery and step-by-step lecture made you feel like you were reliving the events of *Zulu Dawn*.

If you want to explore history with miniatures or attend one of our conventions, contact: Mike Montemarno (HMGS—East Coast), 8808 Greens Lane, Randallstown MD 21133, U.S.A.; or Robert Bigelow (HMGS—Midwest), c/o Friend's Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington Street, Waukegan IL 60085, U.S.A. Mention that you saw this in DRAGON® Magazine!

Reviews

The first review was originally discussed on the long drive back from Historicon. The author of this review is Dale Ridder, one of our club's campaign masters whose hobbies are military history and gaming.



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Dale has made contributions to Iron Crown Enterprises as a consultant and is an active contributor to gaming publications. His review is based on his historical perspective.

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below Average
***	Average
****	Above Average
*****	Excellent

TACTICA game

* 1/2

The TACTICA game, by Arty Conliffe, is billed as a "complete rules system which simulates the battlefield tactics of ancient armies." More accurately, it is the *start* of a rules system for ancient warfare. In its favor, it is the first set of rules I have seen in which the majority of illustrations are color photographs, and the overall appearance of the rules is first class; larger companies should take note. The rules are also well furnished with diagrams illustrating the various rules and restrictions covered. In these respects, this game is far superior to other miniatures rules that I have encountered. However, the TACTICA game has its problems, and these lie in two areas: rules quality, and the concept of the system itself.

The rules would clearly benefit from a careful editing job by someone who was initially unfamiliar with the system. The single most glaring reason for this is the use of "melee dice." Melee dice are used to determine casualties inflicted by units in contact. The number of melee dice used for infantry units, on which the game focuses, is never given. In order to find out this fact, one presumably must call or write the author.

Another problem lies in the manner in which unit deployment is handled. On page 4, the rule for initial army set-up says that deployment is drawn on a scale map prior to play and revealed only when play begins, with all units placed precisely as indicated. Yet on page 11, under the rules governing movement and deployment, it is stated that the game "affords a General with the opportunity of discovering where the enemy is and then moving and deploying to face him." As there are very severe restrictions on movement in these rules, the requirement for secret deployment renders it impossible to discover where the enemy is prior to committing one's troops.

Some desperately needed rules are missing, too. The final five armies listed in the rules are essentially cavalry: Byzantines, Arabs, Ostrogoths, Sassanid Persians, and Vandals. There are no rules governing cavalry vs. cavalry combat. This is a massive hole for a game that claims to be "an accurate portrayal of the historical battlefield systems used." There are minor problems as well. At best, the rules are only a

start toward a system.

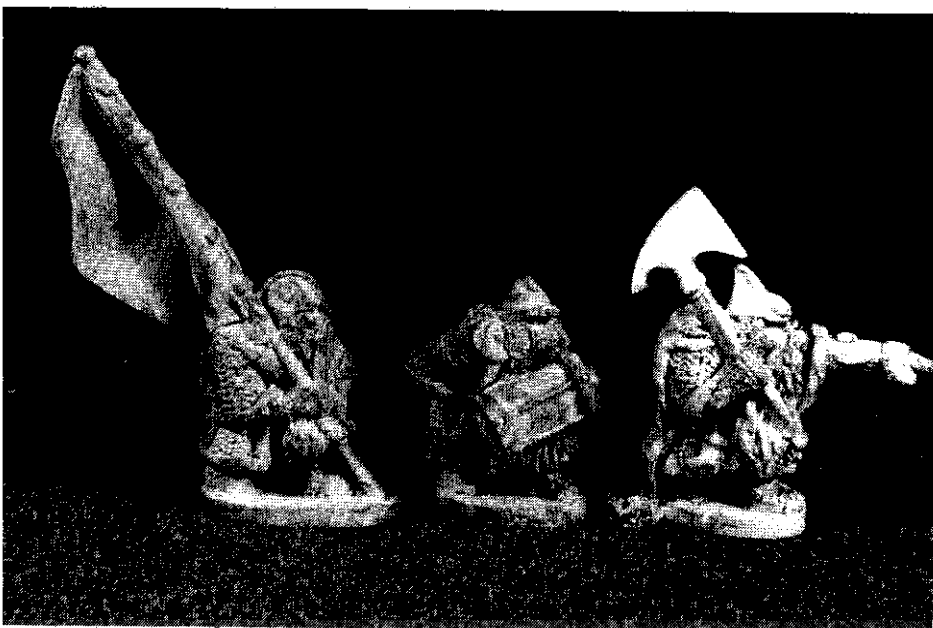
The other major problem area is in the concept of ancient warfare as described in the game. The basic assumption here is that the only units that counted were the heavy infantry. From this assumption, the rules are skewed so that no other unit can effectively compete. Yet, when you look at the historical record, heavy infantry was not the be-all and end-all of ancient warfare. Light infantry and skirmishers, which in the rules are very unhistorically restricted to the same speed as heavy infantry, could and did wreak havoc on heavy troops; see the defeat of the Spartans at Sphacteria and Lechaeum for proof. Many of Alexander the Great's victories were won by his superb use of cavalry. One looks in vain for a diagram of the tactics used by the Byzantines, so

thoroughly explained in Sir Charles Oman's *The Art of War in the Middle Ages*. Army organizations and table set-up are rigidly fixed, making it virtually impossible to accurately recreate historical battles—the key test for any historical rules system. There are other difficulties as well, which limits on space forbid discussing.

Having said all this, what is the benefit of this game to the fantasy miniatures gamer? The chief benefit is that the TACTICA game does a good job of introducing a beginner to the problems of ancient warfare (which can include large-scale fantasy warfare as well), thanks to the use of diagrams and pictures within the rules. The TACTICA game, used with more widely accepted miniatures rules or board games on ancient combat, would be an excellent way to begin fantasy miniatures



Dwarf Battleset—Warriors (Grenadier Models)



Dwarf Battleset—Command (Grenadier Models)

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gaming on a large scale. The cost of the TACTICA rules is \$19.95, and it may be ordered through your local hobby shop.

Feathers tone's Complete

Wargaming

Every hobby has its special people, those whose names are virtually synonymous with that hobby. In miniatures gaming, one such person is Donald Featherstone, who has for years helped people learn how to use miniatures in gaming. Some of you may remember Don from the 1988 GEN CON/ORIGINS game fair; he was a featured guest, and his talks were almost always filled to capacity. Many of the people who came to listen were role-players who wanted to see how war games were played.

Don now has a hard-cover book that I must recommend to everyone who is interested in learning more about historical miniatures gaming. *Featherstone's Complete Wargaming* has 192 pages of color, facts, and simple rules. He begins by explaining why people play war games and gives definitions of some common gaming terms. He provides insight into how to get the best possible use out of his book. Best of all, the reader is treated to an abundance of pictures, maps, and side-bars on the topic of miniatures war games.

The battles covered in this book extend from one of the earliest battles ever recorded, the battle of Kadesh in 1288 B.C., to battles of World War II. Also included are engagements from Roman and medieval times, the English Civil War, the American Revolution, Napoleonic wars, the American Civil War, British colonial wars, and airborne and armored battles of modern times. Each section contains a brief history of one battle, troop listings, and scenery tips.

The book starts out with generic miniature rules that are simple to use. Each scenario adds to these rules only what is needed to run the battle in question. This system allows you to run a fast game lasting a couple of hours (what might normally take you a week to play with other rules). It would be easy to photocopy these rules or to put them on index cards to use for similar scenarios.

The only problem with this book is the weird order in which many of the battles are inserted. Instead of placing battles in chronological order, they seem to be ordered according to the popularity that these periods enjoy with gamers.

I highly recommend this book for its large number of rules sets and numerous color and black-and-white pictures. It costs \$29.95, but it provides a better total value than most rule books and games produced today. It is available through your local bookstore or hobby shop and is published by David & Charles, Newton Abbot, London, England.

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SF-11 Heavy Multi-Turreted

Tank

Since the introduction of tanks by the British in World War I, armor has played a growing part in military history—and in miniatures war games. The heavy tank covered in this review follows the concept of "bigger is better." The miniature is 1/300th (5mm) scale and is massive even at that size. It is 2 1/8" long, 3/8" wide, and 7/8" high. It comes in 10 pieces and requires some assembly with either epoxy cement or cyanoacrylate glue. Eight of the pieces are turrets; the other two form the main body of the tank. The first main-body piece is a solid structure with four regular tank bodies joined together to form one platform base. This base contains the holes for the turrets and has a fire-control station mounted between the forward turrets. The treads and suspension are clearly visible on this unit, as are fusion tanks and a sort of jet exhaust in the rear. The second main-body part is the massive superstructure for the tank. This fits on the first piece and contains rocket launchers, crew quarters, observation ports, and hatches.

This vehicle has uses in many SF games having combat vehicles. For example, this tank can be used as an Ogre Mark III for Steve Jackson Games' OGRE® game, as a ground tank for FASA's CENTURION™ game, or as a ground support unit for infantry in FASA's BATTLETECH® game.

This miniature does have some shortcomings. The bogie and tread assembly in my model has out-of-round spots on the lower wheels and a few areas where the body did not fill properly when it was cast. Inspection of the miniatures at my shop reveals that two models out of six on hand have the same problems. In addition, mold joint lines run right through the sides of the lower tread sections, and special care must be taken to avoid removing important details. Additionally, you must use filler putty to make the body appear solid, as there are some small molding differences between the parts, resulting in gaps.

I highly recommend this model for its versatility and excellent price (\$4.50). With very little work, you can make this vehicle the star of many games.

Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.

5938 Carthage Court
Cincinnati OH 45212

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® miniatures

11-003 Human Magic-Users

11-007 Elf Magic-Users

*** 1/2

Mages are an essential part of any fantasy role-playing party and are important figures in any collection. Just as there are many types of mages to fit players' needs, there are literally hundreds of different mage figures, dating back to the old Mini-figs line. Into this melee of magical miniatures, Ral Partha has launched its new magic-user figures for the AD&D® game. Each Ral Partha adventure set contains two figures, one male and one female, with similar equipment and clothing.

The human male in #11-003 looks more like a shaman than a mage. He stands with his arms raised above his head, clutching a staff in his right hand and a crystal ball in his left. He wears an open vest with a wide belt having two daggers close to the buckle. His legs are bare except for his knee-high boots. The facial features are well done, with a short, slightly rounded beard. His face has a look of concentration, and his mouth is open as if chanting. The hair is long and flowing with a headband visible in the front. Musculature is good on the entire figure.

The human female wears a bikini-type costume and stands with her staff leaning on the ground, but is otherwise outfitted the same as the male (there are some marked physical differences, of course).

The male figure has some problems. There is a large amount of flash that goes from boot to boot and must be removed. The staff over his head is visibly joined to his hair and should be separated. The mold line running up his left side has a noticeable separation in the belt, and the front and back halves of the belt, vest, and left arm are off center. It will take some careful filing to set this right. The female, on the other hand, is very good and has little flash.

The male elf mage wears a light metal or braced leather shoulder protector and holds a dagger in his left hand. His right hand grips an ornate staff extending away from him at an angle. He has bracers and puffed-out sleeves, with a jerkin covering his chest and sides. His legs are bare except for his ornately fringed boots. The elf stares straight ahead; his high cheekbones and slightly slanted eyes stand out. His ears are covered by long flowing hair, which is tied in back and bound with a headband. The musculature is very good.

The female elf also wears a jerkin with shoulder pads, though without bloused sleeves. She wears a bracer on her right wrist and clutches her staff with that hand. It appears that she also has spell-casting equipment hanging on her belt. A cape is draped on her back. This elf does have some problems. She has a very square and full face, not the thin and angular face usually associated with elves. Her long hair reaches the ground and is bound in two places; the highest of the

two ties is too small and appears to cut the hair off at that point. The worst problem is the mold-joint line on her right leg which, because of its location, leaves little room to do the work needed to fix it.

Even with its defects, my personal pick would be the elf pack, whose figures can be used as either elves or humans. The elf figures also look like they could store more spell components. Both human and elf packs are good, even if they need work. Each pack costs \$2.50.

Grenadier Models, Inc.

P.O. Box 305
Springfield PA 19064

Grenadier Models UK Ltd.

19 Babage Road, Deeside
Clwyd, Wales
United Kingdom CH5 2QB

9003 Dwarf Battleset

Dwarves have a long history of having to fight to maintain their property. It is only natural for them to have a standing army—and Grenadier has now given us a unit to spearhead this army. This set contains eight different fighting figures and a command unit. The only other dwarven set with a command unit and similar appearance is the "Bugman's Rangers" set from Games Workshop, consisting of 17 plastic 25mm figures for \$29.95.

All of these figures have full-length chain mail coats ending just above the ankles, with mailed gloves reinforced with bands at the joints. All except the drummer carry axes, but each figure has his weapon in a different position: held at the ready, cutting, or blocking. Each set of chain mail is slightly different, some having patches and holes: The helmets and boots are different, too, and some figures have shields and supplies. Some faces have guarded looks and glares; others show surprise. Beards differ in length, form, and texture. Variety is the watchword.

The command unit consists of a drummer, colors carrier, and officer. The colors carrier's axe is slung behind his back; he is bent as if placing the colors. The officer points ahead and has his axe slung over his right shoulder. He has badges on his helmet and cape; his pose suggests leadership. The drummer, who beats cadence for the troops, beats a large strapped-on drum. Unfortunately, the drumstick detail is poor and detracts from the miniature.

These are good but, sadly, not fantastic miniatures. Each figure had some flash or visible mold lines. Some chain links are filled, and the flag is molded in such a way that it will be very hard to paint. These are little problems, but they make the difference between an excellent set and a merely good one. The price for the set is \$8.95, and it's worth it.

Alliance Miniatures

P.O. Box 2347
Des Moines IA 50310

OR 30 Heavy Spearorc

Everybody's favorite simple villain is the orc, and there is always room for different and well-made orcs. Enter Tabletop Games, an English firm represented in the U.S. by Alliance Miniatures. The figure submitted was the OR 30 Heavy Spearorc, from their Black Orc Fighting Series. The figure stands $\frac{3}{4}$ " tall in a crouched defensive position with a long spear. The spear point is lashed to the pole. The orc has bare feet, but he wears chain mail with plate mail at the arms, wrists and legs. The plate shows good detail, with appropriate gaps between pieces. The orc also has a helmet that protects very little of his face. A long fur coat is draped from his shoulders, wrapping around the back of his feet, and is held to the mail by two unadorned clasps. His shield is round and plain. The hands' detailing is good, with visible joint and muscle structure. His face is creased in a scowl, with eyes squinted, jaw thrust out, and tusks extended slightly over a thin slit of a mouth.

Some things are poorly done and need work. The outside surface of the shield has some small pits; also, the mold does not quite line up, producing an uneven section on the shield's bottom. This can be fixed by running a file carefully over the shield, unless you want the shield to look battle damaged. You also need to work on the inside of the shield (the one really weak spot on the miniature) which seems to have a chain mail look—a continuation of the orc's uniform. This needs to be removed. The other points are minor. A mold ridge at the top of the helmet must be removed, and the spear needs a better point.

I like this orc and feel he will be a good addition to my orc army. These figures come one to a pack for a reasonable \$1.25 each. The flier also mentions Wolf Riders; with the recent Games Workshop price increases, these will be a welcome addition to the market. We will attempt to obtain these and let you know. Ω



Elf Magic-Users (Ral Partha Enterprises)

Photograph courtesy of Ral Partha Enterprises



Heavy Multi-Turreted Tank (Scotia Micro Models/SIMTAC)

Photograph by Mark Hammergren

Games

Continued from page 40

available from West End Games, RD 3, Box 2345, Honesdale PA 18431.

LIGHTSABER DUELLING PACK game, by Alfred Leonardi. West End Games, \$12.00. Ever play with any of the LOST WORLD game books? If you have, you'll know what these books are all about. In this pack are two booklets and two character cards. One book contains illustrations of Darth Vader wielding a lightsaber, using the Force to fling objects, being sliced in the leg by another lightsaber, and so on. The other book shows Luke Skywalker in similar but not entirely identical situations. Using the two books, two players battle to see who wins the duel. Each turn, maneuvers and attacks are chosen from the character cards. The players cross-reference the numbers to see the results. The duel continues until one character has run out of Force Points. Once the system has been grasped, play proceeds rapidly and makes a large number of options available. Games are usually over within minutes, so we're looking at a quick diversion rather than a full evening's gaming. Even so, this game is a lot of fun. It's avail-

able from West End Games, RD 3, Box 2345, Honesdale PA 18431.

COMMAND DECISION game, by Frank Chadwick. GDW, \$12.00. Forget your fantasy and science-fiction settings, and taste the thrill of World War II combat in the COMMAND DECISION game. Using slick rules and playable in real time (one turn equals 15 minutes), this is the best set of miniatures rules I've ever played. Clearly presented and capable of handling complicated situations with a minimum of fuss, it leaves other miniatures rules far behind by giving the excitement of command without the tedious administration of the quartermaster.

The game even comes with its own campaign scenario, "Stolberg Corridor," which pits advancing American forces against entrenched German resistance. Although possessing superior numbers at first, the Americans are working against a time limit as German reinforcements head toward the front.

Some friends and I have been playing this scenario on the average of every two weeks for over a year now, and it has remained tense and exciting throughout. Even at this late stage in the campaign, it's still touch and go whether the Americans are going to succeed. It's a great value and

nicely presented. If you're worried about collecting and painting miniatures, use 1/300th scale figures; they're cheap as well as easy and quick to paint.

Bastogne, by Frank Chadwick. GDW, \$8.00. This campaign supplement for the COMMAND DECISION game introduces a few new rules and some background on the German and American forces active in the Ardennes in the winter of 1944. This is a big campaign and one that I look forward to playing. Ω

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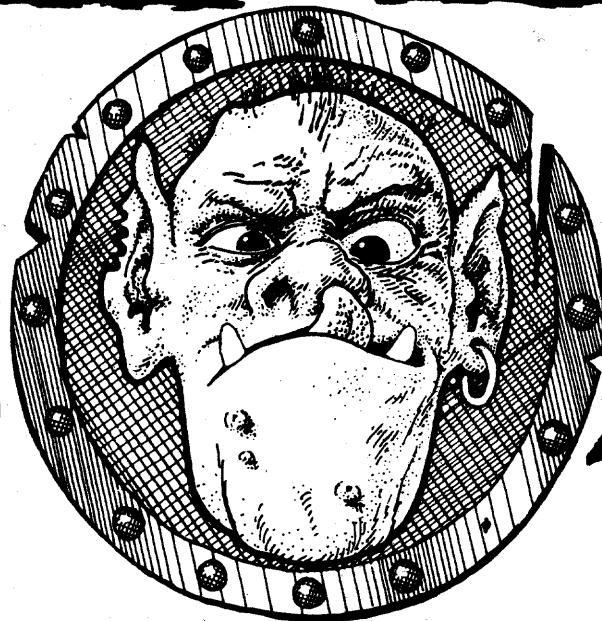
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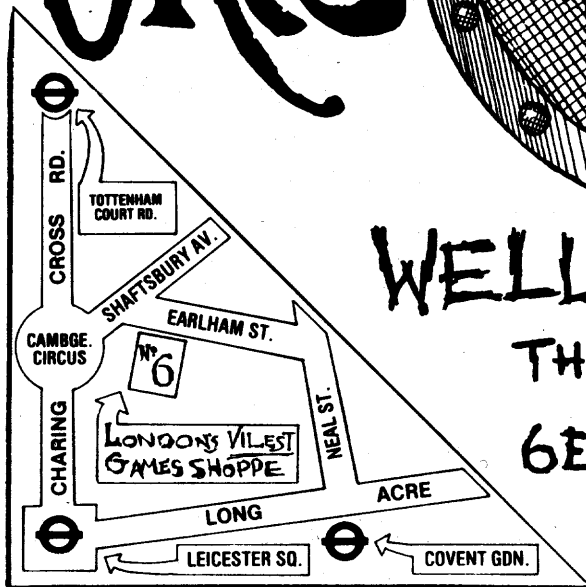
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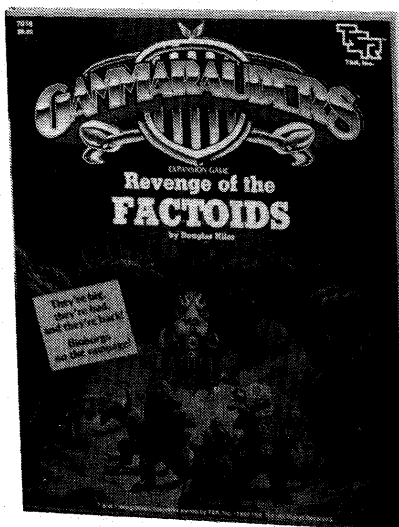


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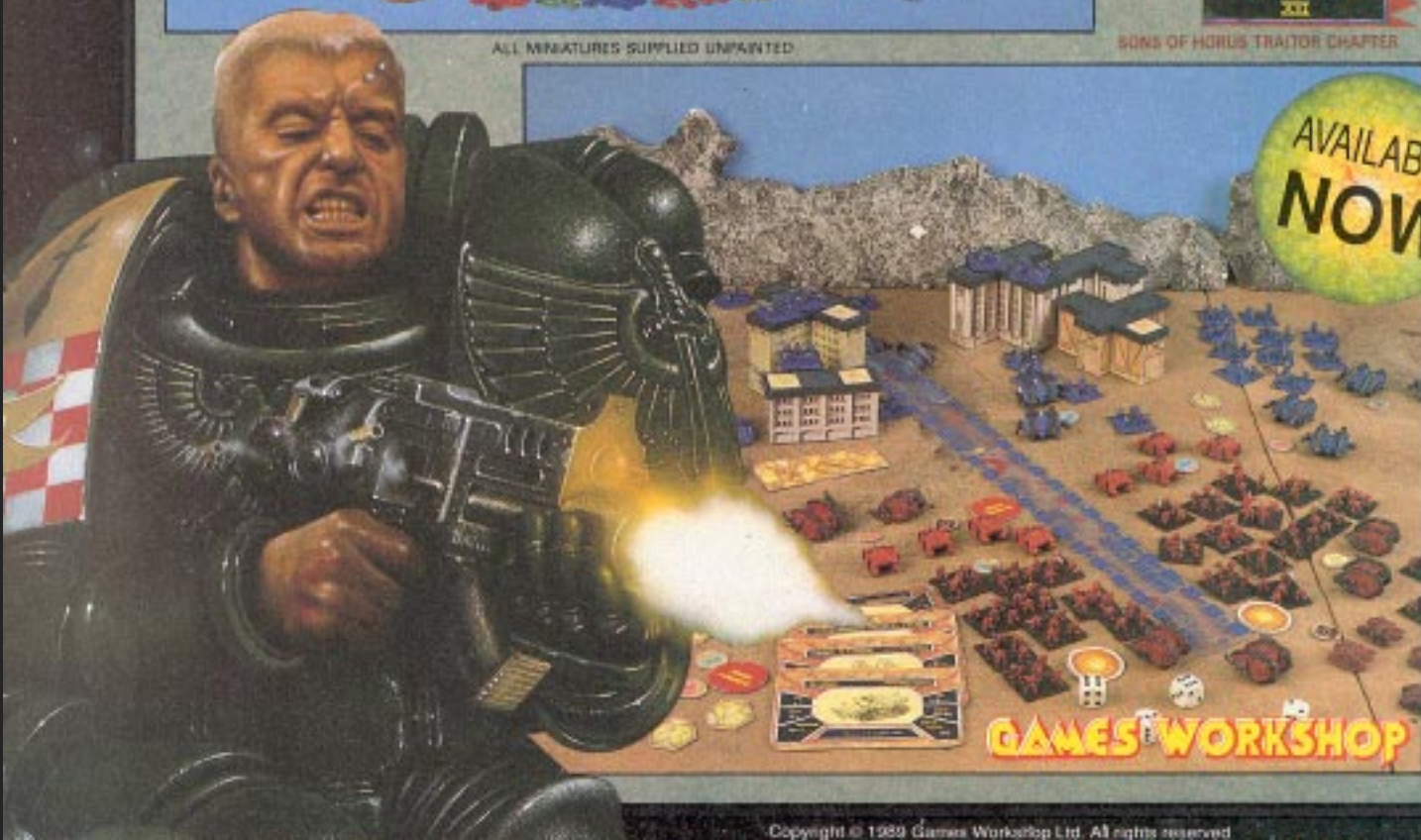


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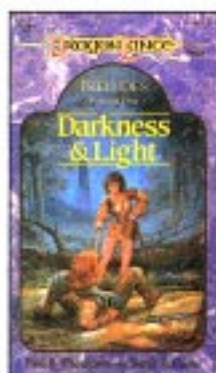
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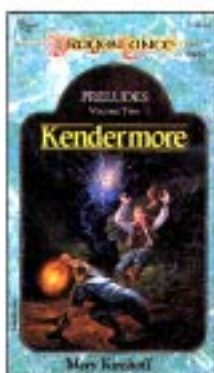
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Illustration by Bill Willingham

At Close Quarters

"Reality rules" for combat in the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game

by Jeffrey A. Sullivan and Bruce W. Onder

While the combat rules in the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game are more than adequate for most situations, some Administrators and players might like a little more realism in their encounters. Presented here for your consideration are a handful of "reality rules" you can incorporate into your campaign.

Gun-drawing speeds

Normally, a gun may be drawn during a turn in which no other action is taken by that character. However, the character may also make a combined action of Draw/Attack, which results in the attack being made at $\frac{1}{2}$ skill level. It stands to reason that, all other things being equal, a gun holstered at the hip (a la the Old West) will be drawn and fired more quickly than one holstered at the ankle or shoulder.

The Initiative Modifiers table herein is suggested to account for drawing speeds associated with various holster positions. "Location" indicates the location of the holster, and "Penalty" refers to the penalty applied to the initiative roll for the round in which the Draw/Attack action occurs. For unusual gun placements, extrapolate from the table. If you use this table, you should also use the "Modifying Initiative Rolls" reality rule in the boxed set's *Player's Guide*, pages 63-64. In addition, agents should exercise forethought in stowing weapons; while the front waistband is a fast-draw location, it is also very visible. The Administrator should take exception (and rightly so) if everyone keeps their weapons in plain sight.

Example A: Nick Li (Orion) bumps into the infamous Tom Dobson (Web) during a routine infiltration mission. Both agents go for their guns in Draw/Attack actions. Nick has his gun holstered at the shoulder (-1). Tom, on the other hand, is well known for keeping a .45 with dum-dum slugs in his rear waistband (-2). Nick rolls a 6, adds 4 (his DEX bonus), then subtracts 1 (the initiative modifier) to get 9. Tom also rolls 6, adds 4 (he's just as quick as Nick!), but subtracts 2 from his initiative due to his gun location. He gets an 8, so Nick shoots first. Getting the jump on Tom may just have saved Nick's life! Tom, should he survive this encounter, might rethink his gun placement.

Ranged weapons

Those of us whose characters are highly skilled in the use of ranged weapons, but whose characters' hand-to-hand combat skill checks are embarrassingly low, have woefully regretted the ruling that states no ranged weapons can be used in close combat. The following is a reality rule that allows such actions. Only one-handed ranged weapons can be thus used, and only until they need to be reloaded. A weapon cannot be reloaded while a character is engaged in close combat. Note that the use of guns and other ranged weapons in close combat is a dangerous proposition. In hand-to-hand combat, your opponent can make a grab for your possessions. If the enemy you've been trying to plug succeeds in wrestling your gun from you, you've got problems!

Reality Rule 1: A character may use any one-handed ranged weapon (pistol, dart gun, etc.) while engaged in close combat with other characters. Due to the harried nature of close combat, all attacks made with the weapon at close quarters are at $\frac{1}{4}$ skill level (plus the point-blank bonus of +30). It is assumed that the opponent is either actively seeking to control or avoid the firer's gun arm. In addition, on a Bad Break, the ranged-weapon user has accidentally shot himself (the opponent jammed the gun into the firer's stomach at the last possible moment, for example). On a roll of 96-98, the wound is superficial, causing only one point of wound damage to a randomly rolled body area. On a 99, however, a normal damage roll is taken.

In this situation, agents cannot bump or call shots. Prepared and braced shot bonuses do not apply, and scopes cannot be used. This is purely a "take it as it comes" technique. When the gun is empty, the firer must choose a close-combat option (no reloading allowed).

Example B: Randall Scott (Orion, Pistol 2, total skill of 76) encounters martial artist Xiao Mi (Web). Mi rushes forward as Randall draws his gun. In the first turn, Randall gets his only shot (*Player's Guide*, page 76). Normally, on the next turn, Mi would force him into close combat, but since Randall has a measly 25 in Basic Melee, he decides to stick to his gun. In turn two, Randall needs a 49 to hit Mi [(76/4) + 30 = 49] at point-blank range. But Randall rolls a 96—a light wound to himself! He rolls a 3

for wound location, and takes one wound to his abdomen (Mi wrestled his gun hand into a bad position). In turn three he rolls a 35, a hit to Mi's left arm. Normally, Randall could bump this hit two areas, but since he's in close combat, he must take what he gets.

The combat continues until one of the combatants is neutralized or the gun is emptied. In the latter case, Randall must then select a close-combat technique.

Multiple actions

The game system allows for multiple actions to be chosen in a single turn of combat (e.g., Move/Attack). It is occasionally very important to know exactly when in a turn each of the two actions occurs.

Example C: John Calhoun (Orion) is running for his life from the gun-toting assassin Mel "Whitey" Whiteford (Web). John's movement allows him to run 50' in a turn, and he is 25' from a cliff from which he plans to jump. Mel is hot on his trail, 25' away. Mel chooses Move/Attack, and John chooses Move. Mel wins initiative. According to the standard rules, he would close with John and shoot before John could move. What can be done?

Reality Rule 2: In a situation in which a character performs more than one action in a turn, the character must list the specific order in which he will perform the actions (e.g., Move/Attack, Attack/Move, etc.). The first action occurs at the point indicated by the initiative roll, including the optional modifiers for such things as DEX and injuries. Each subsequent action occurs at a point equally spaced between the rolled initiative point and 0 (the end of the turn).

Example D: Mel (as above) rolls 8 for his initiative, and John rolls a 5. Mel makes his first action (Movement) at 8, and his second at 4 ($8/2 = 4$, $8 - 4 = 4$). Since John moves at 5, he has a chance to escape. If Mel had rolled a 12, initiative or higher, both of his actions would have occurred before John's, and the point would have been moot ($12/2 = 6$).

Expanded luck-point use

In the standard TOP SECRET/S.I. rules, Luck Points can only be used to keep a character from being killed or disabled. The following reality rule allows for an expanded role of luck points in a campaign. [This idea was discussed during the creation of the TOP SECRET/S.I. game but was discarded because of the potential for abuse by players. Administrators who use this concept should be aware of this potential problem.]

Reality Rule 3: In addition to their normal uses, Luck Points may be used to ensure that a character's actions succeed. The player must state before an action roll is made if a Luck Point will be used to aid the success of that action. The result of using a Luck Point is that the action will fail only on a roll of 99. Such a failure is not a Bad Break; the action only failed.

Only one action may be so modified.

Thus, a character may ensure that a lock is picked, a message is decoded, a jump is successful, a prisoner is successfully interrogated, etc. In combat, the player may ensure only that his character's attack hits. However, using other Luck Points after the attack hits allows the player to determine the amount of damage done (within normal limits) and where the attack hit (one Luck Point each). Critical hits cannot be inflicted on an opponent in this manner. This rule may not be used to explicitly kill a PC or NPC (although the result of the action might be the death of said person).

Example E: Roy "Ug" Lee (Orion) runs into the nefarious Doctor Fremdliebe (Web) in Holland. The evil doctor usually carries a customized rifle cane; indeed, Roy notices, the doctor swings his cane up as if he's about to fire. Roy slips his own .22 Beretta autoloader from his rear waistband and grimaces as the doctor fires; the bullet whizzes past Roy's ear.

"I'd better use a Luck Point to kill him," Bill says. He knows that Fremdliebe is dangerous, and he doesn't need or want a drawn-out battle.

"Sorry, it doesn't work that way," the Administrator tells Bill, "but you can use a

Luck Point to hit him and another to do maximum damage."

Bill elects to shoot without using a Luck Point in hopes of hitting the doctor, but if he hits he plans to use Luck Points to guarantee hit location and maximum damage. Roy does hit—and six points of damage are done to the doctor's chest.

The Administrator looks at his records. The doctor has seven damage boxes. "Well, you hit him pretty good, but he's still up. In fact, it looks like he's getting ready to shoot again."

Bill groans. Sometimes even the best of luck is not enough. Ω

Initiative Modifiers for Draw/Attack Actions

Location	Penalty
Ankle	- 3
Back (rifle only)	- 4
Coat pocket	- 1
Hip	0
Pants pocket	- 2
Shoulder	- 1
Waistband (front)	0
Waistband (rear)	- 2

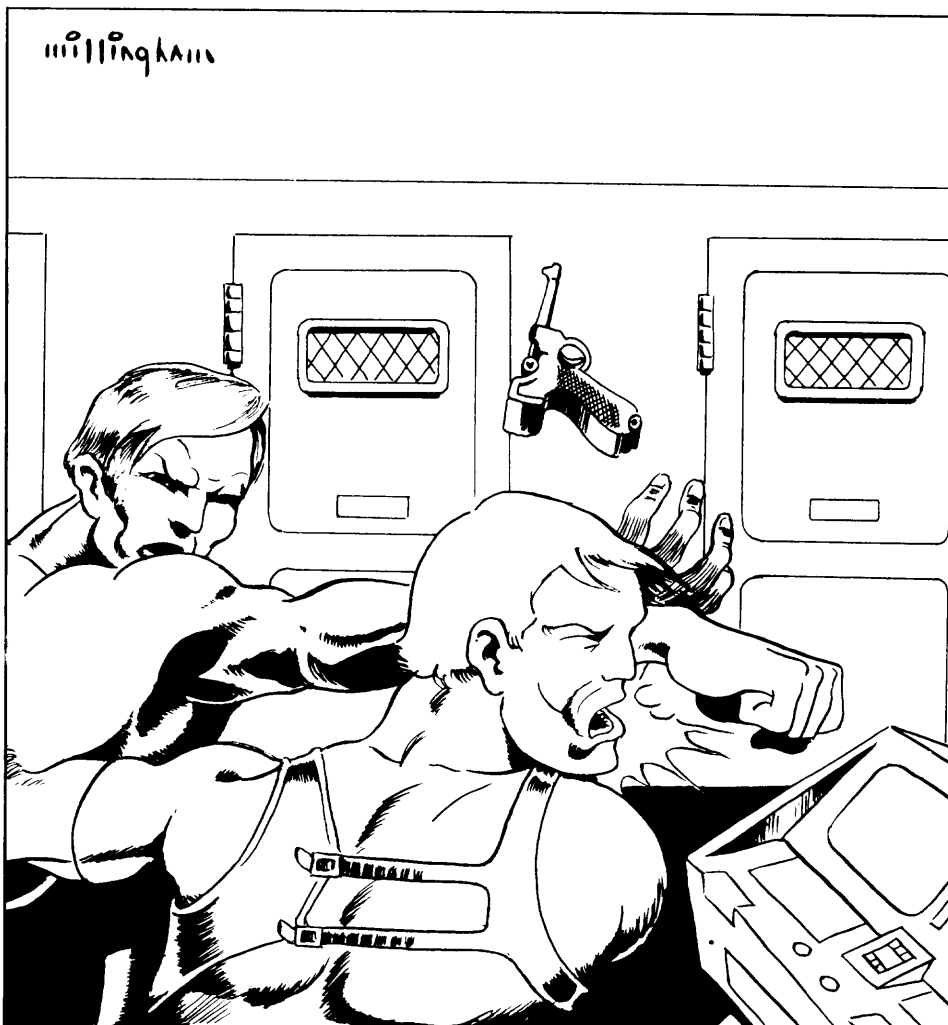


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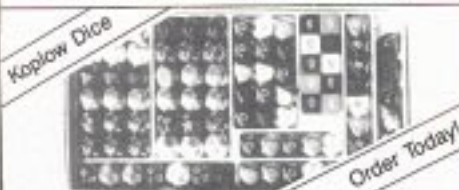
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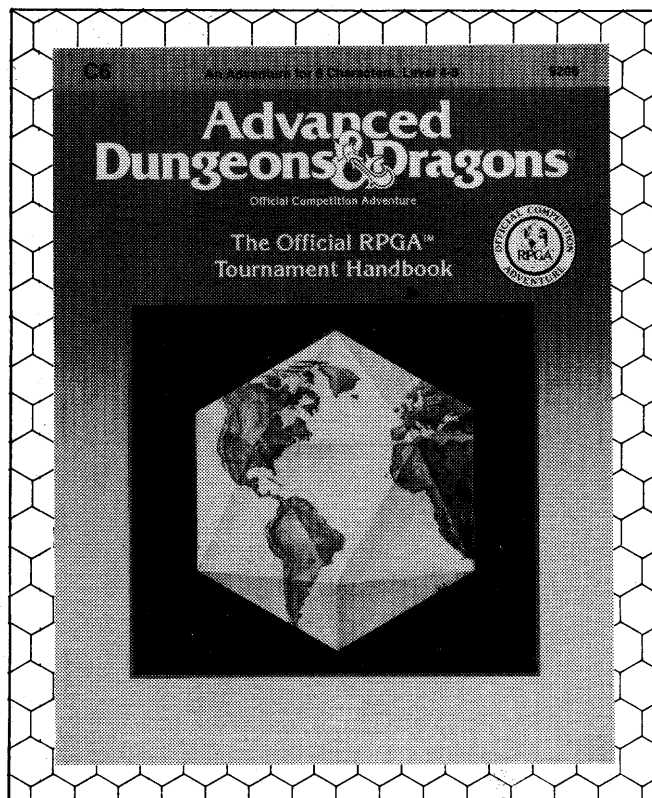
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The Gamers Have Chosen!

The winners of the 1989 Gamers' Choice Awards

The Gamers' Choice Awards for 1989 were presented at the 1989 GEN CON® game fair in Milwaukee, Wis., on August 11 at the MECCA arena. The presenters were Lorraine Williams and Jean Rabe. Votes were collected from gamers at conventions and through POLYHEDRON™ Newszine, and balloting was administered by the RPGA™ Network.

Some of the winners have won other awards as well. See "The Envelope, Please!" in DRAGON® issue #149 for the winners of the 1988 ORIGINS™ Awards.

Best Family Game: MERTWIG'S MAZE™ gamefolio (TSR, Inc.)

Best Satirical Role Playing Game: MACHO WOMEN WITH GUNS game* (Blacksburg Tactical Research Center)

Best Fantasy Game: GURPS game, Basic Set, 3rd Edition* (Steve Jackson Games). This game also won the 1988 ORIGINS Award for Best Role-Playing Rules.

Best Science-Fiction Role-Playing Game: CYBERPUNK game* (R. Talsorian Games)

Best Other Category Role-Playing Game: BULLWINKLE AND ROCKY™ game (TSR, Inc.)

Best Role-Playing Adventure: *Castle Greyhawk* (TSR, Inc.)

Best Role-Playing Accessory (tie): *Lords of Darkness* (TSR, Inc.), and *Kara-Tur: The Eastern Realms* (TSR, Inc.)

Best Historical Strategy Game: THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER™ game (TSR, Inc.). This game also won the 1988 ORIGINS Award for Best Boardgame Covering the Period 1947 to Modern Day.

Best Science-Fiction Strategy Game (tie): BUCK ROGERS™: Battle for the 25th Century game (TSR, Inc.), and MERCHANTS OF VENUS game* (The Avalon Hill Game Company)

Best Miniature Line: AD&D® *Metal Miniatures* (Ral Partha Enterprises). This line also won the 1988 ORIGINS Award for Best Fantasy or Science-Fiction Figure Series.

Best Computer Game: *Pool of Radiance* (Strategic Simulations, Inc.). This game also won the 1988 ORIGINS Award for Best Fantasy or Science-Fiction Computer Game, and it won the Beastie Award for the most popular computer game of 1989 (see "The Beastie Knows Best" in this issue).

Best Play-By-Mail Game: HEROIC FANTASY (Flying Buffalo, Inc.)

Best Professional Gaming Magazine: POLYHEDRON Newszine (TSR, Inc.)

Best RPGA Network Tournament: *Scrap Of Paper*, by Skip Williams and Jean Rabe

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Editorial

Continued from page 5

woman; his lawyer claimed that the influence of the TV series *Kojak* was responsible. The claim was rejected, and the defendant was found guilty.

You could create a list with any number of similar cases, and you could add to it the few incidents that are claimed to have been spawned by role-playing games. For example, a 19-year-old student in Asheville, Ala., apparently planned a convenience-store robbery with two friends while playing an espionage RPG. A store clerk was shot to death during the actual hold-up in May 1985. The murderer was sentenced to prison for life without parole. Do you believe that the game could be at fault? Do you believe that the student would have been fine if he'd never seen the game?

We're only scratching the surface of the issue here, of course. Several claims have been made that RPGs cause suicidal behavior, but these claims tend to fall apart under close examination as the evidence is so fragmentary and loose. You could make a great case that good grades are harmful, if you use the same set of standards that anti-RPG people often use in selecting their own evidence. That McKee student was noted in the newspaper to be a "straight-A student" (*Milwaukee Journal*, September 19, 1989; page 5A). The student who shot the store clerk was a "high school honor student" (*Milwaukee Journal*, no date available). At a student-relations meeting I attended in high school, the story was told of a student who shot himself to death on a baseball diamond; in his hand he clutched a letter of acceptance from a university and a copy of his high-school transcript (another all-A student).

You could also make an interesting case that religious beliefs cause antisocial and criminal behavior, but I've already done that in a previous editorial, in *DRAGON*® issue #134. (Besides, we have Jim Bakker, who provides overkill on the issue.)

I think good grades and religious feeling are fine things. But if you play with the statistics and are a little careless about the way in which you select and edit your data, you can "prove" good grades and religion (and RPGs) are as bad as anything else. This kind of "evidence" selection is how all the hoopla over the Bermuda Triangle got underway a few years ago. Most of the ships that were claimed to have been mysteriously lost there actually vanished during major storms at sea—all mention of which was dropped in later accounts of the same incidents.

The vast majority of people reading this editorial are, I assume, gamers who are angry as I am about the way in which RPGs are treated by a few well-meaning but uninformed people in education, social services, and the media. Games are not alone in this abuse, as movies and records

also draw fire at times for their perceived effects on those who enjoy them. Various school boards and libraries across America have gained a certain infamy for banning books like *The Wizard of Oz*, *Huckleberry Finn*, or Anne Franks *Diary of a Young Girl* for being bad influences on students. I'm surprised that more students don't support such book bannings, as it would certainly reduce the amount of homework that would be assigned.

There will always be incidents like those described in this article. If you eliminated every possible game, book, record, or movie that was connected with a bad incident, none would be left. The presence of these recreations is not the issue. Finding ways to identify and help those people with serious mental and emotional problems is the real issue.

How should you react to accusations that RPGs are bad for you? In my opinion, here are the two best things you can do:

1. Examine the evidence with a critical and discriminating eye. Take time to think about what you read or hear on the news. Does the reporting sound reasonable, or does it leave you wondering if a lot of hype and paranoia are being used? Do you actually believe the rationales given for why certain events took place? Can you find more information on the topic that will let you make an informed decision

about the matter? Don't let others do your thinking for you.

2. Be reasonable. If you are a teenager and live with your parents, you will have to accept their decisions (and your school's) on whether or not they will let you play RPGs. But if you are given a chance to discuss the issue, make sure you are informed—and be on your best behavior when you discuss it. People are always more impressed when they are confronted with someone who shows all the signs of being mature and responsible as well as being well informed.

If you are looking for material in support of gaming, you might want to read two other articles on this topic: Tracy Hickman's "The Ethics of Fantasy," from special edition #1 of GPI's *GATEWAYS*™ Magazine; and Frank Mentzer's "Squeaky Wheels," from *POLYHEDRON*™ Newszine #26. Both are worth the trouble to find.

As for me, if I really believed that RPGs were harmful, I would not be writing this editorial. I will do what I can to see that they stick around for a long time to come.

Use your head. And enjoy life.

Robert M. Coe



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Books

Continued from page 48

blank verse, but this time the emphasis is on a more action-oriented chase across sparse landscapes, in search of a moving city and the dark powers trapped within its walls. McCarty's quirky writing is as intriguing as ever, and his characters are at their best here.

New series entries are as plentiful as grapes in a winery. The Planet Builders sequence (Ivy Books; \$2.95 each) is up to 10 books as I write (and may conclude at that point), maintaining its above-average quality throughout. To the extent that these novels can lure readers of the Hardy Boys and Sweet Valley High (arrgh!) into the SF/fantasy audience, they're potentially of enormous importance—and they're not bad reading besides. A short step upward is *Witch of Rhostshyl* (Ace, \$3.50), J. F. Rivkin's third tale of mercenary swordswoman Corson and sorceress-noble Nyctasia. Rivkin blends light adventure with a touch of more thoughtful conflict in appealing fashion. And another step finds *Prince of the Blood* (Foundation, \$18.95), in which Raymond Feist returns to the world of Midkemia for a convoluted but curiously unambitious tale of intrigue and danger. Feist's real distinctiveness has always been in his treatment of magic, but there's little spellcraft in this new novel, though what there is hints at a better book to come. Ω



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A-Man, a superhero with a yellow tank top featuring a large red 'A', red shorts, red gloves, and red boots, is shown in a dynamic flying pose. He is positioned diagonally across the frame, with his right arm raised and fist clenched, and his left arm extended forward. The background consists of a large, dark, cratered celestial body, likely a moon or planet, which fills the lower and left portions of the image. The sky is a plain, light color.

Son of the Ultimate Addenda

Just how much
Limbo can a superhero
swallow, anyway?

by David Edward Martin

Like the two previous "Ultimate Addenda" articles in this magazine (in issues #122 and #134), this article deals with readers' questions about MA3 *The Ultimate Powers Book*, a compendium of superpowers for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Advanced Set. First, however, I must apologize to those readers who have personally written me and even included SASEs for the replies. I am horrible at answering letters—or rather, I am great at answering letters, but I tend to lose either the address or SASE of the person I am replying to, or I just forget to mail my response.

What happens when a being with MG3/Internal Limbo uses that power to capture another character who also has Internal Limbo?

I love topology: It's so twisted. The answer to this depends on who used the power first. If only the attacker (call him "A-Man") used this power, the victim (let's call him "V-Man") is sucked in just like any

other target. V-Man's own Internal Limbo ("Limbo-V") remains unaffected, save that its entry point is now located within the first person's Limbo ("Limbo-A").

If V-Man's power was sufficiently strong, he could capture everything within Limbo-A. A-Man would then have a Limbo-A empty of everything except for V-Man. Once V-Man has captured everything within Limbo-A, a Red FEAT would allow him to completely swallow even the empty space of Limbo-A. It would appear to A-Man that Limbo-A had completely vanished, though the still-captive V-Man would be present. The difficulty of the FEAT is determined by the rank of A-Man's Internal Limbo power. A final Red FEAT would enable V-Man to topologically reverse his situation: Limbo-V would reach out and swallow A-Man, while simultaneously spitting V-Man back into the real world.

If V-Man has TS/Dimension Travel or developed a Power Stunt whereby he can travel through his own Limbo and exit elsewhere, he can skip the above steps and use this power to escape from Limbo-A. However, his power rank must be equal or higher than the rank of the imprisoning power.

If both Internal Limbo powers were used, simultaneously, an extraordinarily twisted convolution occurs. The best example I can think of would be the *Doctor Who* episode in which the Master's TARDIS materialized inside the Doctor's TARDIS. Somehow the two extradimensional fields warped around each other, with the result that each TARDIS had the other within itself. The Doctor's TARDIS was in the Master's control room, while the Master's TARDIS was in the Doctor's control room. The trap was escaped only when both TARDISES simultaneously warped away from each other. In our example, both A-Man and V-Man would have to simultaneously use their powers to eject each other and free themselves.

How far can a being with T9/ Hyper-leaping go if he also has S25/ Growth (Atomic Gain), mentioned in "The Ultimate Addenda" in DRAGON issue # 122?

The initial impression one has is that the distance that being jumps will increase in length. However, both the Atomic Gain and Atomic Growth powers increase the character's weight geometrically. This decreases the distance an enlarged character can leap. In the case of a character who has only his normal strength to rely on, such leaps appear to decrease in length in inverse proportion to the degree that the character grows. For example, a being enlarged fourfold could make leaps that (to him) are only a quarter of the distance he could leap at normal size. In short, if the character could leap 6' at normal size, and then enlarges himself to four times his normal height, he can still only leap 6'. When the character

increases in size until he cannot leap farther than he can step, the character cannot leap at all and must walk.

When travel powers like Hyper-leaping are included, these proportionate decreases in leap length are altered, at least as far as the hero's perception of them is concerned. The rank of the Hyper-leaping increases in the same manner as the Strength rank—that is, the rank gains a +1CS bonus for every 2CS of Growth rank above Feeble. For example, a person with Typical Hyper-leaping and Incredible Growth can leap 10' at normal size, 20' at Excellent-increased size, and 30' at Incredible-increased size.

With Atomic Dispersal, the character's leaps initially increase in inverse proportion to the character's size. However, since the character's density is decreasing, the leaps become harder to control. Wind currents can significantly alter the length of such leaps and can even carry away a low-density hero.

How far can a being with Hyper-leaping go if he also has S30/ Shrinking (Atomic Shrinking), taken from issue #122?

The following Hypothetical Physics lecture also applies to characters with the Atomic Loss form of Shrinking. Logically, the length of the leaps should decrease in proportion to the size of the miniaturized being. However, since the character's weight decreases with miniaturization, such leaps lengthen at the same time! Rather than burden players and Judges with a complex series of equations (which I wouldn't understand either), let's just say that from the character's point of view, the leaps increase in inverse proportion to the degree of miniaturization (e.g., shrinking to 50% of a character's original size gives leaps of 200% their original length), but this increase is negated because the

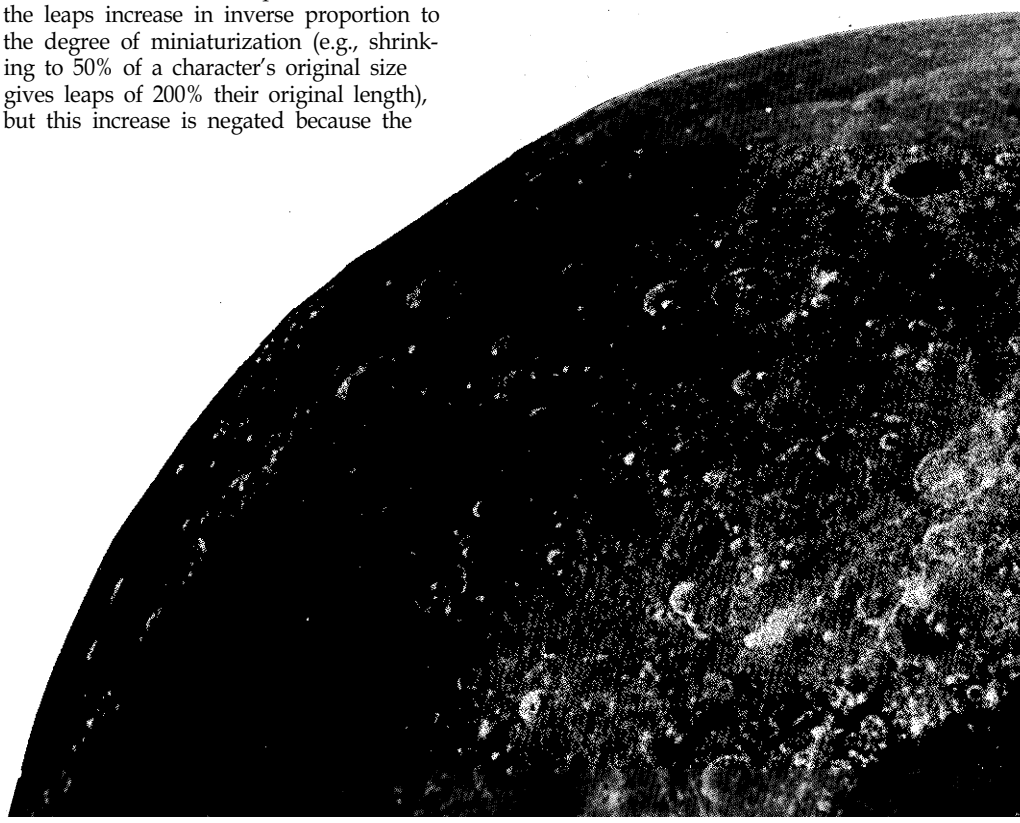
leaper is getting smaller, too. The end result is that, despite the degree of miniaturization, the hero's leaps are still the same length when measured in the unminiaturized "real world." For example, the half-inch Ant-Man and the normal-size Scott Lang can both make leaps of 6' in length, although such leaps would appear to Ant-Man to be 864' in length. Of course, in the light-weight miniaturized state, air currents will alter such leaps (the Judge must rule on these effects in a game).

When the effects of Hyper-leaping are considered, the perceived distances increase even more, but the actual distance covered remains the same. For example, consider the hypothetical villain Grasshopper, who has Ant-Man's shrinking power as well as his own Excellent Hyper-leaping. At normal size, he can leap 30', but when he is miniaturized to half an inch, those leaps appear to him to be 4,320' long but are still only 30' long.

Once the threshold to the Marvel Microverse is crossed, all leaping movement assumes the same proportionate lengths in relation to the moving character as such leaps possessed in the normal-size universe. Further miniaturization then starts the whole cycle over again.

The distance leaped by a character with the Atomic Collapse form of Shrinking seems to shrink in proportion to the character's overall height, because his weight remains the same regardless of height.

What happens when a being has P5/Hyper-speed but not a travel power?



Hyperspeed increases the character's reaction time and movement rate. In the case in question, the hyper-speedster has a proportionate increase in his walking and running speeds, but not in the distances he can cover. Limits on normal fatigue still apply. For example, a relatively Typical person who happens to have Good Hyper-speed could walk at 40 MPH or sprint short distances at a speed up to 150 MPH, but he would tire out after covering the same distances that he could cover at normal speed. Of course, you might develop a Power Stunt that enables a character to rest at Hyper-speed. (I know that sounds oxymoronic, but the concept works.)

What happens when you have both Hyper-speed and T10/Hyper-running at the same rank?

I'll amend what I wrote in the Hyper-speed entry in *The Ultimate Powers Book*, page 78. There I wrote that the Hyper-speed rank can be substituted for a lower-ranked travel power's speed. Let's add two options designed to make the runner more equal to his aerial counterparts.

In option #1, the ranks of the two aforementioned powers combine to produce a higher speed. For example, Incredible Hyper-speed and Remarkable Hyper-running combine to enable the hero to run at Monstrous speed (135 MPH).

In option #2, the presence of Hyper-

speed pushes the travel power's speed and distance covered from the land-speed column to the air-speed column on the Movement Table (*The Ultimate Powers Book*, inside back cover). Thus, the presence of Hyper-speed of any rank increases a Remarkable Hyper-runner's speed from 90 MPH (the land-speed column) to 225 MPH (the air-speed column). If a second Hyper-speed power is generated during the character's creation, this can be used to push the speed over to the space/extradimensional-speed column on the movement table. In the example above, our Hyper-runner's speed would further increase to 4,000 MPH.

What would be the FASERIP statistics of a character with EE3/Energy Doppelganger, both with and without his own mind? What happens if you give him the F1/Berserker power?

The answer to this depends on the nature of the doppelganger and what powers are assigned to it. The doppelganger's Fighting and Agility ranks are the same as those of the character, while its Strength and Endurance are equal to the Energy Doppelganger power's rank. However, if the doppelganger lacks the means to solidify itself, its Strength rank is irrelevant.

If the doppelganger lacks a mind of its own and operates under the hero's direct

control, the RIP statistics are normally those of the hero. If control is broken, the doppelganger usually dissipates instantly. Independently minded doppelgangers require the player to generate new RIP ranks for them.

In either case, the player must decide whether the RIP statistics are merely averages for each doppelganger generated or represent point pools that are evenly divided among all doppelgangers simultaneously operating. This should be decided when the character is created.

Once that is settled, you can answer the Berserker question yourself given the specifics of your situation. In the case of a directly controlled doppelganger, the Berserker effect modifies only the doppelganger's FASERIP scores (if the Berserker power is assigned to the doppelganger) or the FASERIP scores of both the hero and doppelganger (if the Berserker power is assigned to the hero).

Do you have any more questions about *The Ultimate Addenda* and its superpowers? Send your comments, questions, and suggestions to me, care of DRAGON® Magazine. I can't guarantee I'll answer them right away, but I will read them. 📧

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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short, succinct, and under 150 words long.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

CONTRARY, November 10-11

CONTRARY '89 will be held at the Parwick Center in Chicopee, Mass. The convention will feature military/strategy games, role-playing games (including at least two RPGA™ Network events), and miniatures events. Preregistration is \$10 for both days or \$8 for one day. Write to: CONTRARY '89, 933 Belmont Ave., Springfield MA 01108; or call Mark at: (413) 731-7237.

AU GAMERS CONVENTION November 10-12

The Au Gamers are proud to hold the largest fantasy role-playing convention in New Jersey at the Sheraton Tara Hotel, 199 Smith Rd., Parsippany NJ. Events will include RPGA™ Network tournaments, a charity game, a costume contest, a dealers' area, and a miniatures painting contest. Prizes will be awarded for best players and best gamemasters. For reservations, call: (201) 515-2000, ext. 5800. Mention the convention to receive special room rates. Registration fees are \$8 per day and \$20 for the weekend. Registration at the door will be \$10 per day. Write to: Steven M. Scheel, Oakwood Village, Bldg #26, Apt #9, Flanders NJ 07836, or call: (201) 927-8097; or John Moir, 361 Vandervier Ave., Somerville NJ 08876; or call: (201) 725-1257.

SCI CON II, November 10-12

This science-fiction and gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Virginia Beach, Va. Artist guests of honor are Ron Lindahn and Val Lakey-Lindahn. Special guest is Frank Kelly Freas. Events will include panels, readings, video presentations, a costume contest, an art show, gaming, and more. Memberships are \$20 at the door. Huckster tables (which include one membership) are \$100. Send an SASE to: SCI CON II, Dept. DR, P.O. Box 9434, Hampton VA 23670.

ARMISTICE CON '89, November 11-12

This gaming event will be held at the Horizon Activities Center in North Olmsted, Ohio. Special events will include TRAVELLER®, CAR WARS®, BATTLETECH®, DIPLOMACY®, microarmor, and AD&D® game events, as well as Napoleonic miniatures, board and role-playing games, a miniatures exhibit, a miniatures-painting contest, and 24-hour gaming. Registration fees are \$12. One-day passes will be available for \$7. Write to: ARMISTICE CON '89, c/o Horizon Activities Center, 30395 Lorain Road, North Olmsted OH 44070; or call Dave Smith or Fran Haas at: (216) 779-6536 during business hours.

BAMACON 3.5, November 11-12

This convention will be held at the Ferguson Center at University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Ala. This all-gaming convention will have cash prizes. Absolutely no pets will be allowed. Write to: Dave, P.O. Box 6542, Tuscaloosa AL 35476; or call: (205) 758-4577.

GAMESCON (UK) '89, November 11

This gaming convention will be held at the Laindon Community Centre, Basildon, Essex. Dungeon Masters and players are required for AD&D® competitions. Contact Chris Baylis at tel: 0268-419933, or write to: 67 Mynchens, Lee Chapel North, Basildon, Essex SS115 5EG, UNITED KINGDOM.

PENTACON, November 11

The Northeast Indiana Gaming Association will be hosting the fifth annual PENTACON gaming convention in the Grand Wayne Convention Center in Fort Wayne, Ind. Games will include an RPGA™ Network AD&D® tournament, and BATTLETECH®, CAR WARS®, CHAMPIONS®, CIVILIZATION®, DARKUS THEL®, MORROW PROJECT®, and SPACE: 1889® games. Other features are a painting contest and dealers' area. Send an SASE to: N.I.G.A., P.O. Box 11146, Fort Wayne IN 46856.

ROCK-CON XVI, November 11-12

Over 1,000 people are expected to attend this year's convention, to be held at the Rockford Lutheran High School, 3411 N. Alpine Rd., Rockford, Ill. Hours are Saturday, 10:00 A.M. to midnight; Sunday, 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. A new event this year will be the painting competition, with numerous prizes. We expect over 15 major dealers. Admission is still only \$5 for the entire weekend, with no additional fee for gaming events. Send an SASE to: ROCK-CON XVI, 14225 Hansberry Rd., Rockton IL 61072.

UMF-CON, November 11-12

This role-playing and war-games convention will be held at the Student Center of the University of Maine in Farmington, Maine. Events will include TOP SECRET/S.I.™ and AD&D® games, DIPLOMACY® competitions, miniatures, board games, and contests. Also planned is another murder mystery. Admission is \$5 per day and \$2 per game. Send an SASE to: Table Gaming Club, c/o Student Life Office, Student Center, 5 South Street, Farmington ME 04938.

NOVAG-V, November 17-19

The Northern Virginia Adventure Gamers will host their fifth annual convention at the Carra-doc Hall Inn in Leesburg, Va. All types of adventure games are included, from historical board and miniatures games to science-fiction and fantasy role-playing games. Vendors are welcome. Write to: Northern Virginia Adventure Gamers, c/o Wargamers Hobby Shop, 101 E. Holly Ave., Suite 16, Sterling VA 22170; or call: (703) 450-6738.

UCON '89, November 17-19

This role-playing and strategy gaming convention will take place in the Michigan Union at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Events will include: live role-playing; dealers' tables; a movie room; two AD&D® tournaments; and over 80 events including CIVILIZATION®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, DIPLOMACY®, THIRD REICH®, and historical miniatures games. Gamemasters receive free registration if preregistered. Write to: The Michigan Wargaming Club, P.O. Box 4491, Ann Arbor MI 48106.

UK Masters 1989 AD&D® Tournament November 11-12

This tournament will be held at the WAR '89 Convention at the Rivermead Leisure Center, Richfield Ave., Reading. Entry fee is £3.50 (£2.50 for players with UK ranking points). Make cheques payable and mail to: Mr. C. Froud, 88 Southview Ave., Reading, Berkshire, ENGLAND. Space is limited, so register early.

- ❖ indicates an Australian convention.
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DALLAS FANTASY FAIR, November 24-26

Featuring over 140 dealers' tables, more than 60 guests, and over 2,000 attendees, this fantasy event will be held at the Marriott Park Central, 7750 I-635 at Coit Road in Dallas, Tex. Attractions will include two 24-hour video rooms, Japanimation, 24-hour gaming, four-track programming, a masquerade, an open con suite, an art show and auction, a charity auction, artists' and writers' workshops, autograph sessions, filksinging, dancing, an amateur-film festival, a talent show, and more. Admission is \$15 for all three days in advance, or \$20 at the door. Single-day admissions may be purchased at the door; prices are \$8 Friday, \$10 Saturday, and \$8 Sunday. Write to: Bulldog Productions, P.O. Box 820488, Dallas TX 75382; or call: (214) 349-3367.

MACQUARIECON '89, December 8-10 ♦

The Macquarie University Role-Playing Society will host Australia's largest role-playing convention at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Events will include AD&D®, PARANOIA*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, JAMES BOND*, TRAVELLER*, STAR WARS*, M.E.R.P.*, WARHAMMER*, SPACE: 1889*, JUDGE DREDD*, and board games and freeforms. Registration is \$30 (Australian) for the weekend or \$3 (Australian) per session with a \$7 registration fee. Write to: M.U.R.P.S., P.O. Box 1577, Macquarie Centre, North Ryde NSW 2113, AUSTRALIA.

GAMEFEST '90, December 8-10

The Gamemasters Guild of Waukegan, Ill., is hosting this event. RPGA™ sanctioned events are scheduled, as well as D&D®, STARFLEET BATTLES*, and BATTLETECH* games. Other events include historical and fantasy miniatures and board games. Call: (312) 336-0790.

TRITICON I, December 8-11

Students Tempted by Adventure, Fame, and Fortune (S.T.A.F.F.) will host their first convention at the Price Center on the University of California—San Diego campus. Events will include AD&D® tournaments; BATTLETECH*, CAR WARS*, and COSMIC ENCOUNTERS* tournaments; DIPLOMACY*, HOW TO HOST A MURDER*, GAMMA WORLD*, TRAVELLER*, and WARHAMMER* games, and a live dungeon. Prizes will be awarded to tournament winners. Other events include open gaming, SCA demonstrations, a figure painting contest, a dealers' room, and a flea market. Registration is \$10(\$8) before December 1, \$12(\$10) at the door for the weekend, and \$5(\$4) each day at the door. UCSD students receive the discounted rates in parentheses; include ID number when registering. Write to: TRITICON I, Price Center, E-30, UCSD, La Jolla CA 92093.

WINTER FANTASY, January 5-7, 1990

The RPGA™ Network will sponsor WINTER FANTASY 1990 at the Ramada Inn Airport at Milwaukee, Wis. Special room rates are available by contacting the hotel at (414) 764-5300. Sanctioned events include AD&D® Grand Masters, AD&D® Masters, AD&D® Feature, AD&D® Benefit, MARVEL SUPER HEROES®, TOP SECRET/S.I.™, PARANOIA*, and other tournaments. Other activities include a writers' seminar, Saturday morning breakfast, Sunday brunch, open gaming, and a dealers' area. All gaming is free except for the benefit tournament. Limited preregistration is available to RPGA Network members; contact Network HQ for a preregistration form. Registration fees are \$10 to Network members, \$12 to nonmembers until November 1. Afterward, fees for the entire

weekend are \$15. Send a SASE to: RPGA™ Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

WOTTACON '90, January 6 ✱

The Guild of Melee and Magic's second convention will be held at Goldsmiths' College, New Cross, London SE14. Wottacon will have live-action, tabletop, and PBM role-playing, as well as wargaming and board games. There will be competitions, demonstrations, a large number of trade stands and rooms in which to game. Write to: Alan Bishop, 127 Queen Adelaide Ct., Penge, London SE20 7EB, UNITED KINGDOM; or call: 01-659-4857.

CHATTACON XV, January 12-14

CHATTACON XV will be held at The Chattanooga Choo-Choo, Chattanooga, Tenn. Accommodations are \$60 flat, \$85 for sleeper car suites. Guests will include Michael P. Kube-McDowell, Robert E. Vardeman, David Cherry, Danny Gill, Wilson "Bob" Tucker, Stan Bruns, and Dick and Nicki Lynch. Registration: \$18 until Dec. 1, \$25 thereafter and at the door. Send an SASE to: CHATTACON XV, Box 23908, Chattanooga TN 37422; or call: (404) 591-9322 (no collect calls, please).

NEW MEXICON I, January 12-14

This science-fiction/science-fact con will be held at the Las Cruces Hilton Inn. In addition to gaming, featured are a variety of people from science and the arts to hold panel discussions and give demonstrations and lectures. Confirmed guests are G. Harry Stein as scientist guest of honor; Real Musgrave as artist guest of honor; James I? Hogan as author guest of honor; and Jim Davidson, Laurie Wiggins, Dr. Mike Hyson, and Greg Kennedy as scientist guests. Author guest speakers will be Walter John Williams, George Alex Effinger, Sonni Cooper, and James Theisen. Write to: NEW MEXICON I, Box 3836, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces NM 88003-3836; or call Lew Maestas evenings at: (505) 522-0115, or Gaylord Teague at: (505) 521-3828.

GAME-A-THON 7, January 14-15

This 24-hour convention will be held at the Town Center Hall, 11740 E. Telegraph Rd., Santa Fe Springs, Calif. A variety of role-playing games, board game tournaments, and miniature events will be featured, including AD&D®, CHAMPIONS*, PARANOIA*, SHADOWRUN*, STAR WARS*, GURPS*, AXIS & ALLIES*, CIVILIZATION*, EMPIRE BUILDER*, WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLES*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, BATTLETECH*, and ADEPTUS TITANICUS* games. There will also be computer games, continuous movies, seminars, demonstrations, a figure painting contest, and a hucksters' room. Advance registration is \$5 until January 8. Registration at the door is \$7.50. Write to: GAME-A-THON 7, c/o Santa Fe Springs Gamers' Assn, P.O. Box 2434, Santa Fe Springs CA 90670; or call Callahan at: (213) 863-7893.

CANCON '90, January 26-28 ♦

Come to Canberra, Australia, for three days of miniatures and board gaming! Also role-play in AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU*, MEGATRAVELLER*, RUNEQUEST*, ROLEMASTER*, MERPS*, CHAMPIONS*, and EVENTYDE* games, plus freeforms and an RPGA™ Network triad of AD&D®, PARANOIA*, and TOP SECRET/S.I.™ games. Write to: Canberra Games Society, GPO Box 1016, Canberra, ACT, AUSTRALIA, 2601. Non-Australian residents should send International Reply Coupons, not SASEs; or call: +61-62-54-9926.

JACKSONVILLE SKIRMISHES '90**February 9-11**

SKIRMISHES presents this role-playing and war gaming convention at the Jacksonville Motel on the Riverwalk, 565 South Main Street, in Jacksonville, Fla. Room rates are \$52 for one to four persons. Events will include AD&D® game features, along with TRAVELLER*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, CAR WARS*, and SEEKRIEG* games. Other events will include board gaming, a KILLER* tournament, dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, demonstrations by the SCA, and many other role-playing and historical events. Hotel reservations may be made by calling: (904) 398-8800. Registration is \$18 for the entire weekend. Send your registration fee to receive a program booklet. Write to: SKIRMISHES, P.O. Box 2097, Winter Haven FL 33883; or call: (813) 293-7983.

GENGHIS CON XI, February 16-18

Staged by the Denver Gamers Assoc., this con's activities include board games, role-playing, computer games, miniatures, auctions, and a miniatures-painting competition. Events include AD&D®, VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC*, CIVILIZATION*, KINGMAKER*, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER*, BATTLETECH*, JOHNNY REB*, NAPOLEONICS*, COMBINED ARMS*, EMPIRE*, and PARANOIA* games, with RPGA™ tournaments, and the nationally known PUFFING BILLY* tournament, a railroad game competition. Registration is \$15 for the weekend until January 31, \$20 after that. Write to: Denver Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 11369, Denver CO 80211; or call: (303) 443-3849.

WOLFCON III, March 2-4 ✱

Wolffcon is back for its third year in Arcadia University's Beveridge Arts Centre. Some of the participants are: the Fantasy Field Trip Society, the *Dr. Who* Society Prydonian Academy, the Monty Python Appreciation Society, and The Stranger the Better club. There will also be two movie rooms, work-shops, lectures and open gaming, along with movie, short story, costume and art competitions. Preregistration: \$10 Canadian until March 1, \$12 Canadian at the door. Write to: WOLFCON, Wolfville, N.S., CANADA BOP 1X0; or call: (902) 542-7133.

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '90, March 24, 25 1990

This convention will be held at the Student Center of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. A wide variety of events are offered, including an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, miniatures judging, and a games auction. Preregistration is \$8 for both days; one- and two-day passes are \$5 and \$10 at the door. Send a SASE to: S.I.U. Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL 62901-4425; or call: John P. Hulst at (618) 457-8846.

How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if "Convention Calendar" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.



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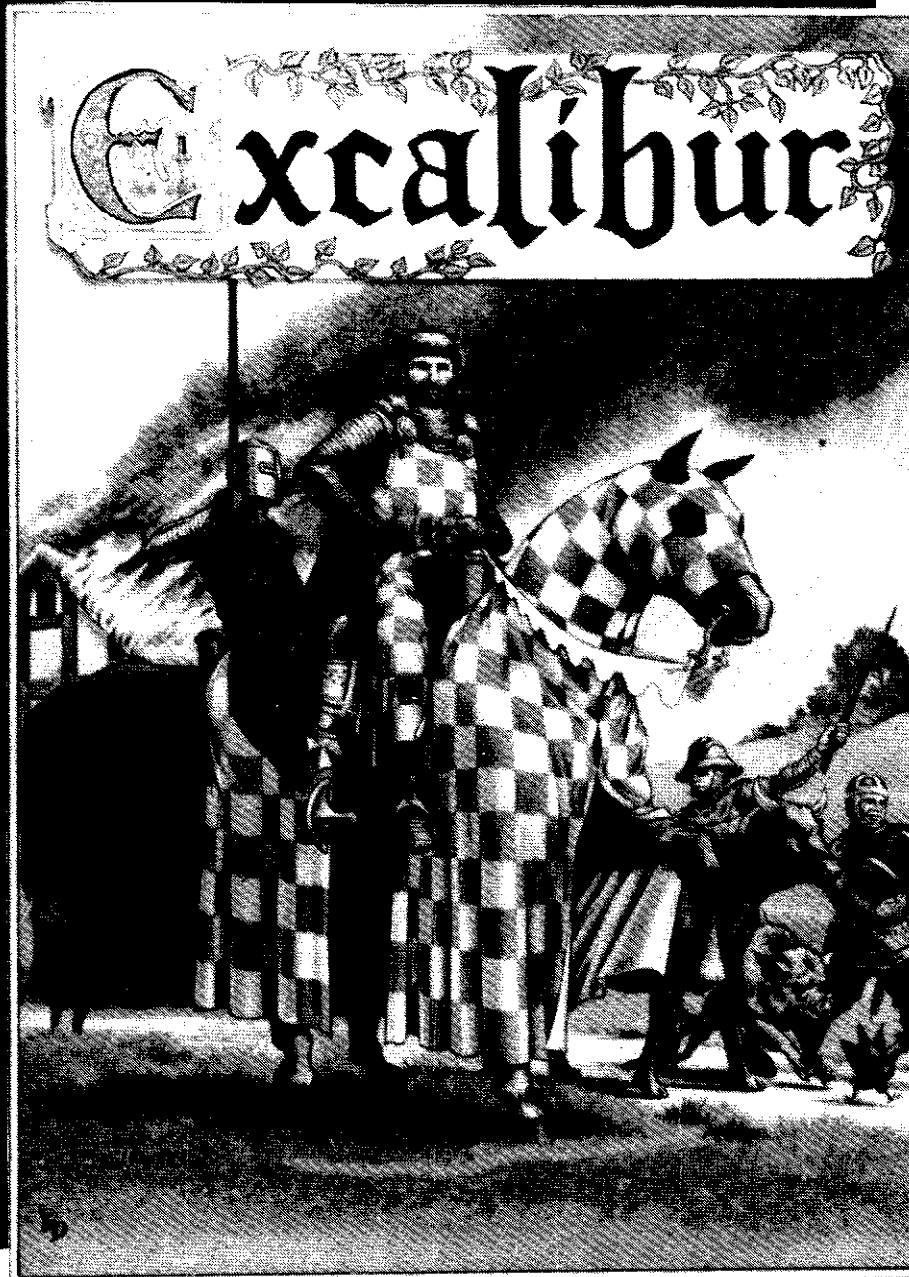
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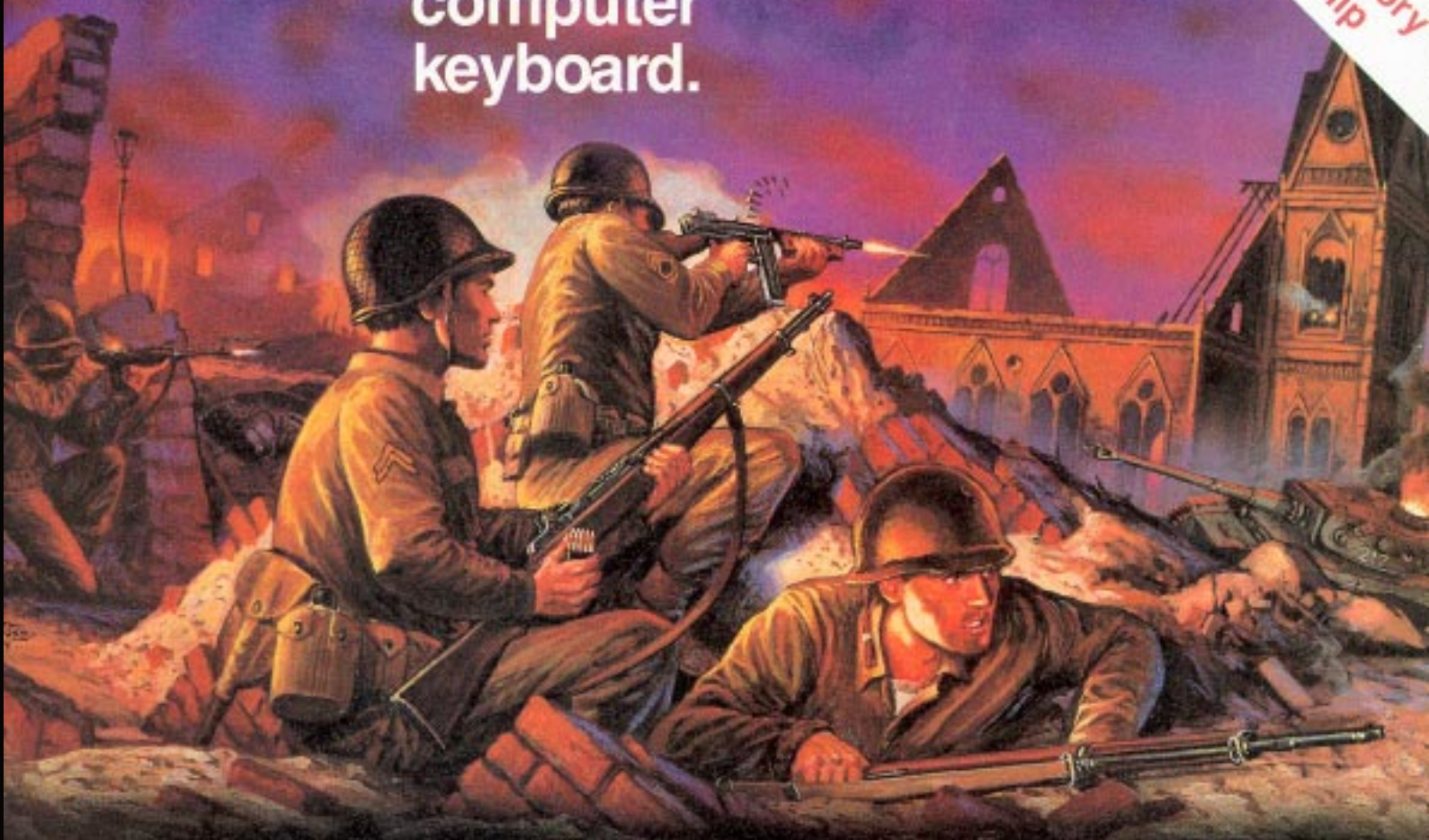


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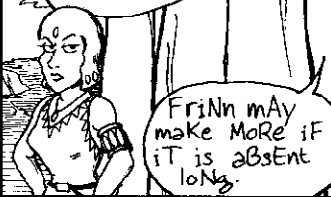
THAT'S THE KEEP OF OGREK THE UNDISCIPLINED

WHAT WOULD HE WANT WITH THE "CRANIAL-HILT-RING" OF FRINN?

COME TO THINK OF IT, YOU HAVEN'T SAID WHY *you* WANT IT.

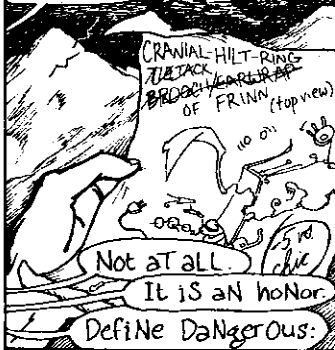
It wants us to rescue it.

It is shiny and will enhance our Nest.



Frinn may make more if it is absent long.

WELL, WE WOULDN'T WANT THAT, NOW WOULD WE. I'LL SNEAK IN AND GET IT, BUT TELL ME — IS IT DANGEROUS TO HANDLE?



Not at all. It is an honor. Define Dangerous:

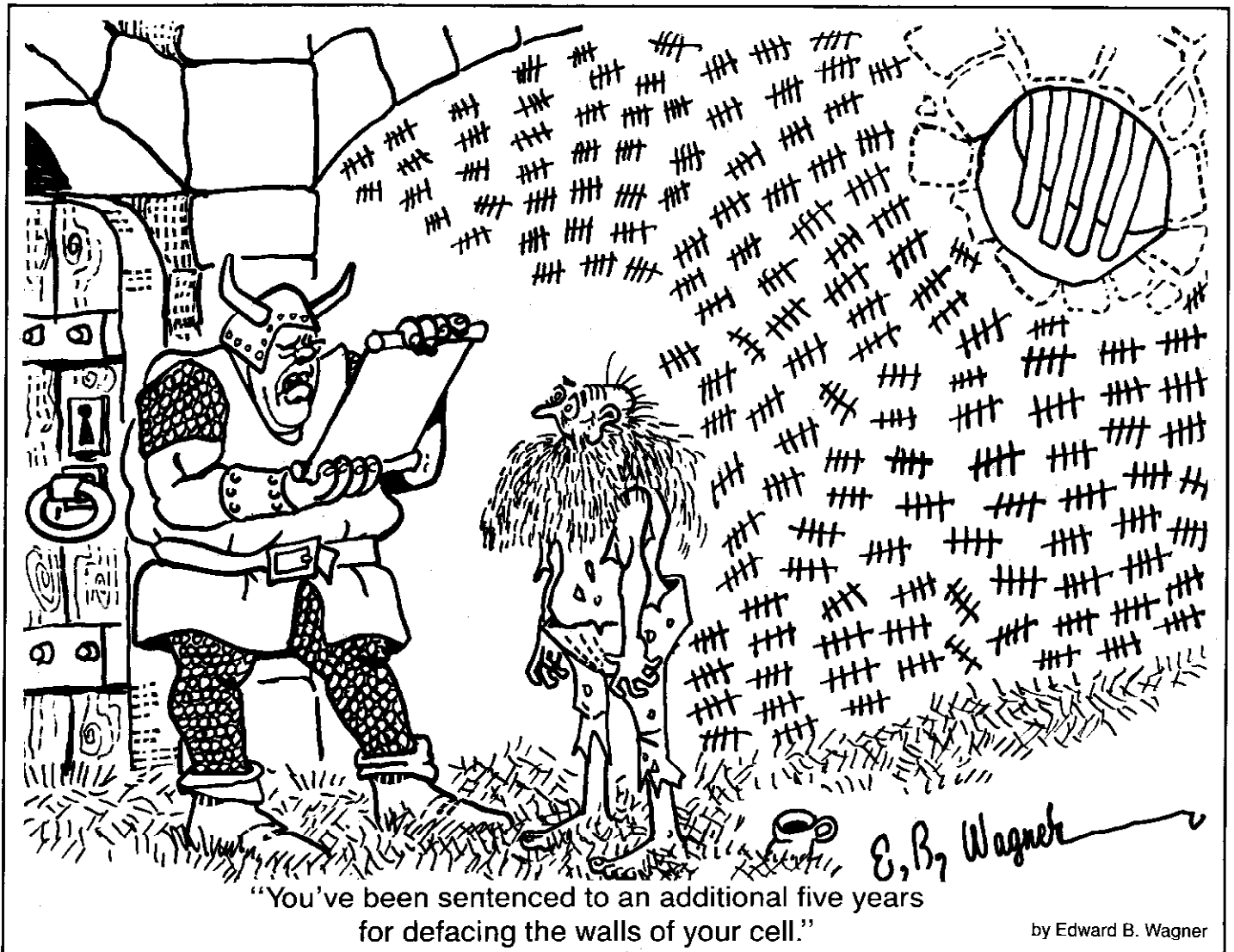
WILL I GET A SAVING THROW. It only rarely adheres to flesh.



Euclidean dice would not avail in any case.

We will care for you tenderly in the event of mischance.

by Barbara Ward and John Adams

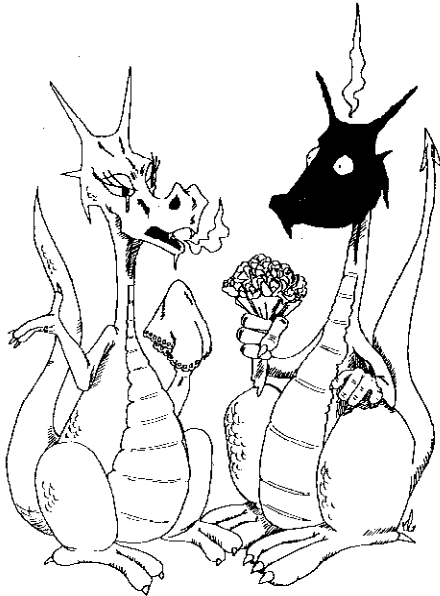


"You've been sentenced to an additional five years for defacing the walls of your cell."

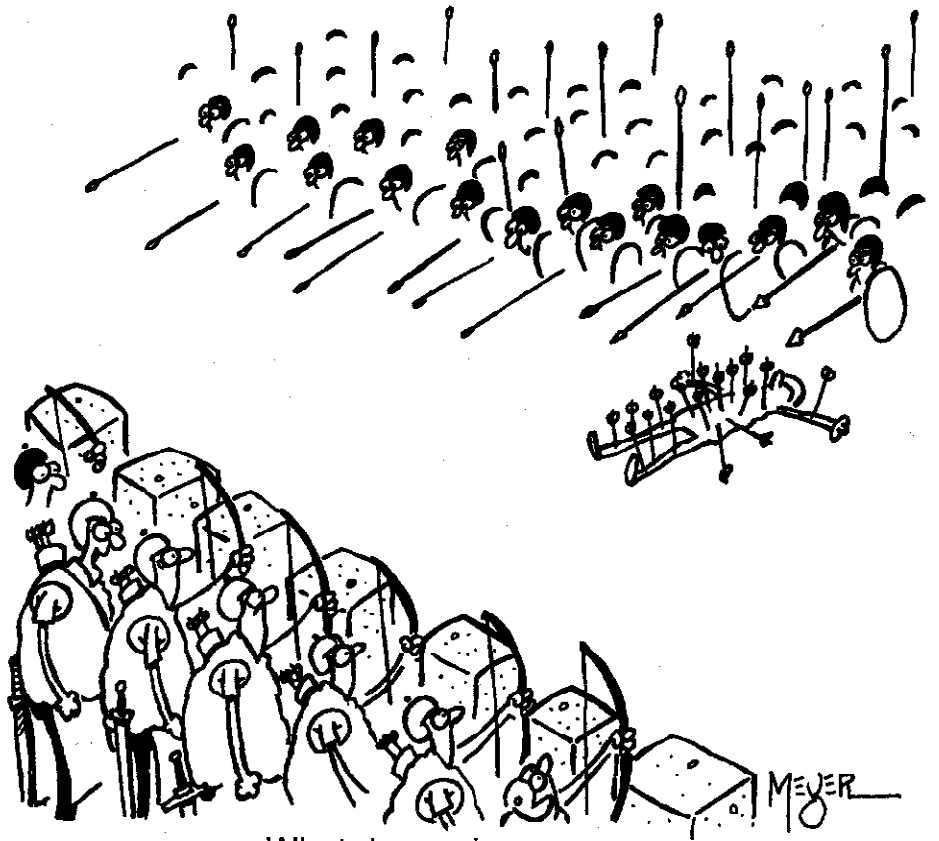
E. B. Wagner

by Edward B. Wagner

I thought I told you,
I'm allergic to flowers.

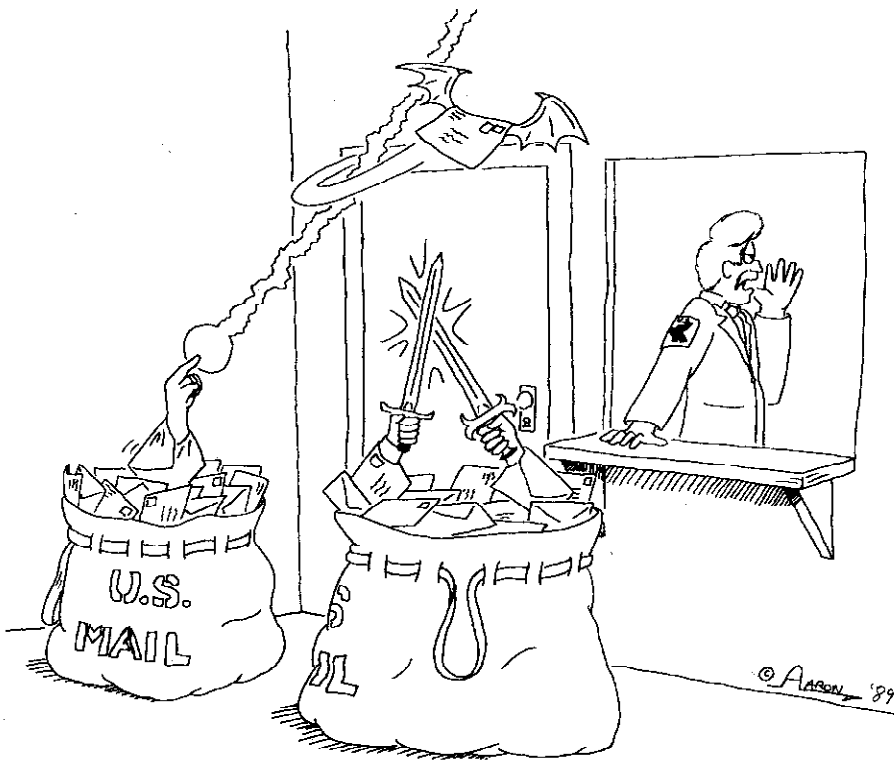


by G. Thomas Doubriley



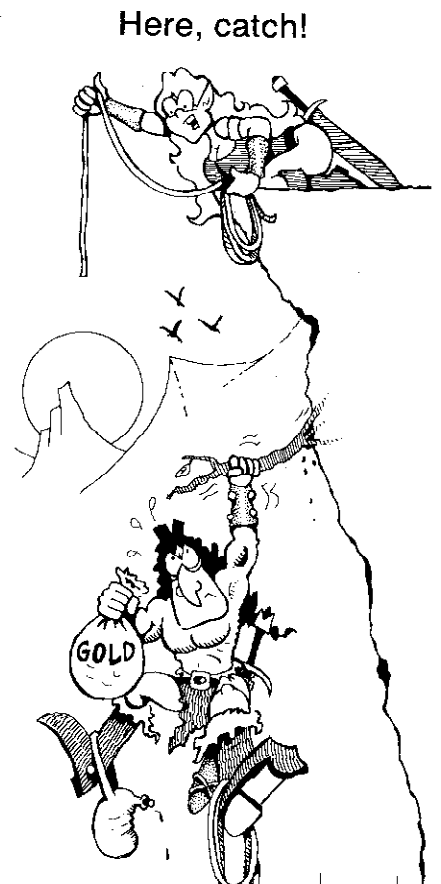
What do you know,
we all aimed at the same guy!

by Dwain Meyer



"Hey, Ed! It's those play-by-mail games again!"

by Aaron Williams



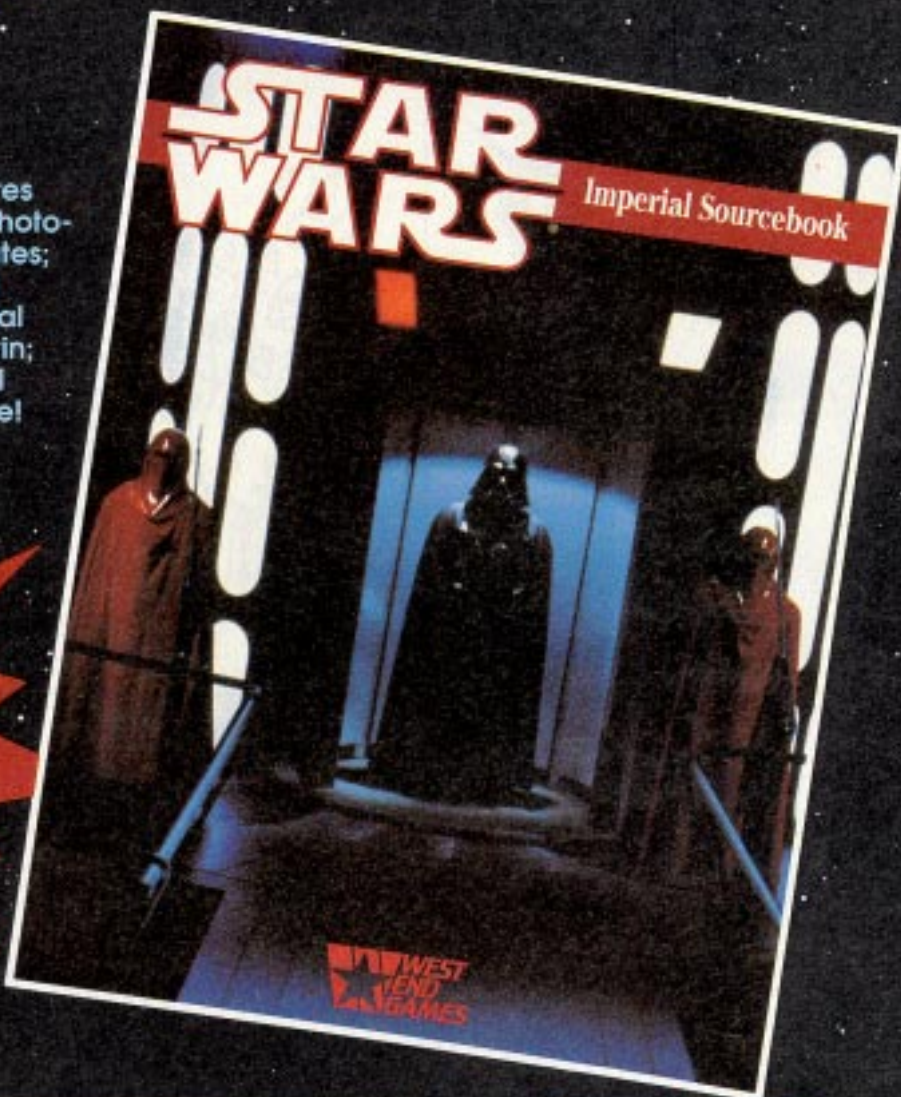
by Walt Hackensmith Jr.

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- ☐ Strike Force: Shantipole
- ☐ Battle for the Golden Sun
- ☐ Starfall
- ☐ Otherspace
- ☐ Scavenger Hunt
- ☐ Riders of the Maelstrom
- ☐ Crisis on Cloud City
- ☐ Otherspace II: Invasion

Games

- ☐ Star Warriors
- ☐ Assault on Hoth
- ☐ Battle for Endor
- ☐ Lightsaber Dueling Pack
- ☐ Starfighter Battle Book

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- ☐ Imperial Sourcebook

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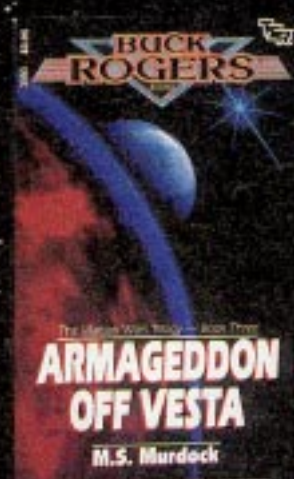
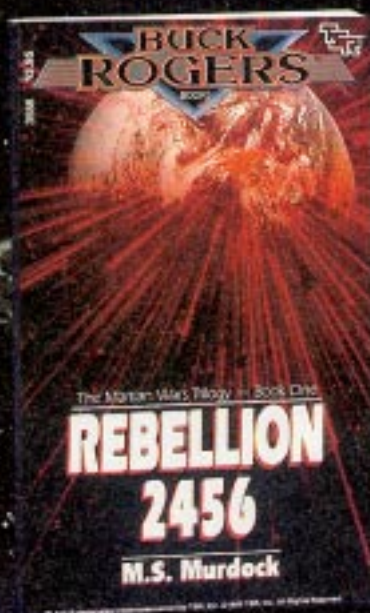
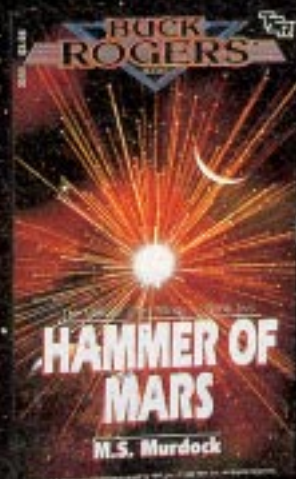
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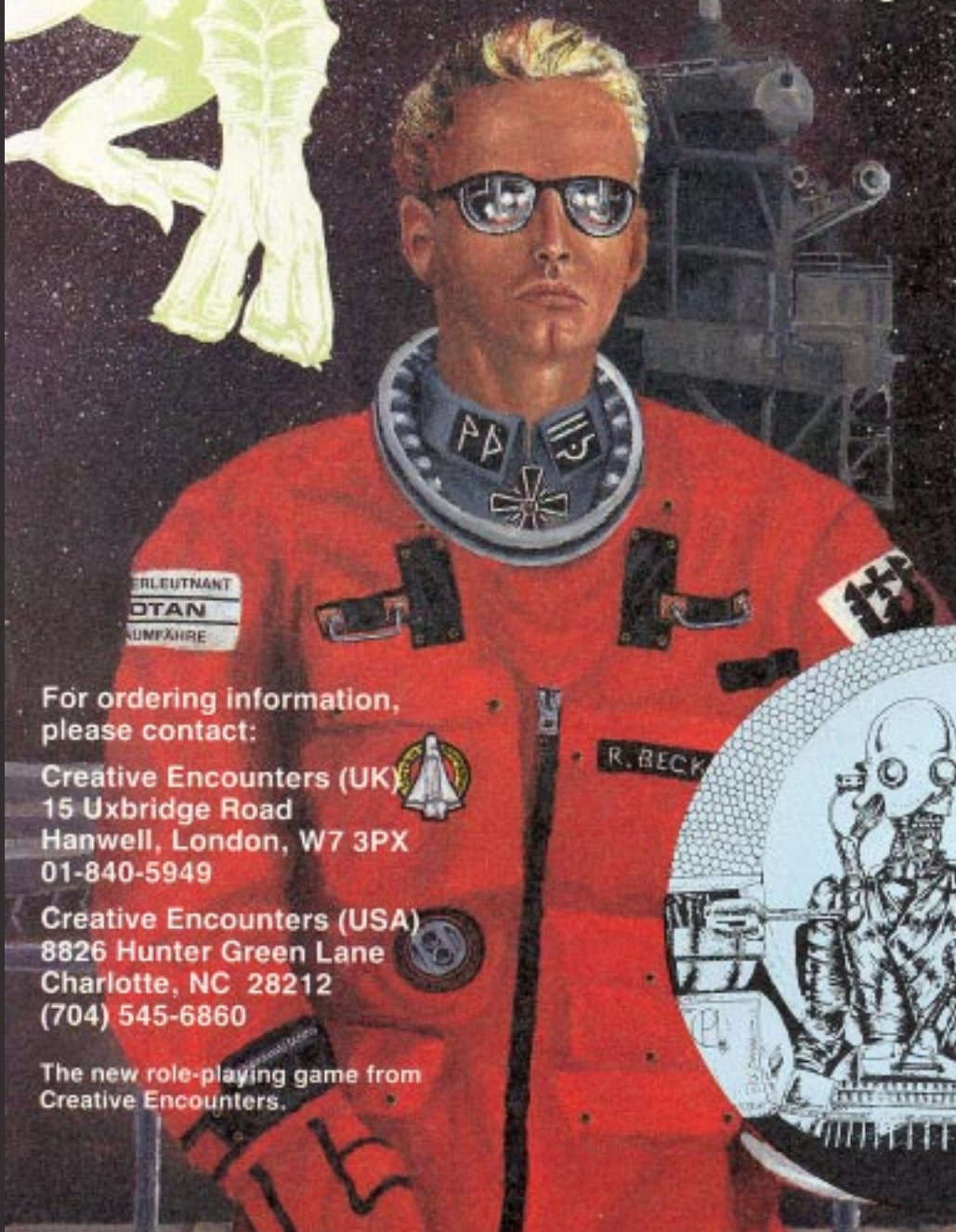
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